The interpretation of fictional violence represented in illustrated books by Australian and Ukrainian gatekeepers of children's literature in educational contexts

by

Halyna Pavlyshyn

BA, MA in English

School of Education,

College of Arts, Law and Education

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To readers, librarians and teachers who inspired me to conduct this study

Declaration of Originality

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The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes on human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian Government's Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committees of the University. Ethics Approval Reference Number H0016888

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Keywords

children's literature, gatekeepers, picturebook, violence, culture, controversial topics, library, genre, fiction, fairy tale, illustration, young readers

Abstract

This thesis explores perceptions of violence in picturebooks by children's literature gatekeepers in educational settings. The main aims of the study are to better understand how controversial picturebooks are selected and curated by teachers, librarians and parents. The research participants are teachers and librarians from Australia and Ukraine. The research is informed by grounded theory methodology. The research methods include interviews, and thematic analysis of the interviews. The findings reveal that gatekeepers of children's literature in Australian and Ukrainian contexts follow a complex and often semi-conscious decision-making process when selecting picturebooks for children. This process can be explored through child-centred, book-centred, and contextual dimensions. The gatekeepers pay attention to the levels of maturity and sensitivity of young readers, to picturebook genres, characters and settings which create different levels of fictionality and to illustrations. In addition, they consider the place and purpose of violence within picturebooks, the mode of reading used for a selected picturebook, and the context. When sharing controversial books with children, preferred modes of reading are classroom discussion with empathetic teachers and family reading with parents. Furthermore, the decisions are influenced by the gatekeepers' cultural backgrounds. In the process of picturebook selection, the role of teachers seems to be more significant in Australia, whereas parental authority seems to be greater in Ukraine. In summary, the research shows that teachers, librarians and parents make complex decisions to select what they deem to be appropriate reading for children and use a range of strategies to curate picturebooks representing violence.

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List of Abbreviations

ACARA – the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

AZAC – Australian and New Zealand Army Corps

CET – Catholic Education Tasmania

CL – children's literature

HREC – Human Research Ethics Committees

IST – Independent Schools Tasmania

RIM – Responsive Interviewing Model

TA – Thematic Analysis

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0. Preface

Once upon a time, when I was 18, my first book of tales was published. The book explored themes of love and friendship, loneliness, betrayal and death. The publisher believed the stories were aimed at five- and six-year-old children, and this was noted on the title page. Some literary critics disagreed and said the tales were not appropriate for very young readers; some librarians placed the book on the shelves for primary school children, and some teachers used the illustrated collection of tales with ten-year-olds in grade 5. As a novice writer I thought that metaphorical stories like mine were written for all ages, and could be read on different levels with various interpretations. This was when I first wondered: how do we decide on the age of a reader and on the appropriateness of a book? What are the distinguishing features of literature read by children? What makes a book *children's literature*?

Years later, after I had done some research in children's literature and three of my novels for children and teenagers had been published, I kept wondering about the concept of *appropriateness* in children's literature. How can authors represent *real* life to a young reader while omitting death, violence and sexuality? Do we have to ban all the controversial topics from children's literature? At the same time, as a voracious reader, I knew that death, violence and sexuality have been present in children's literature for centuries, so I suspected there must be an explanation for this.

Now, I would like to make a confession. I have never been a teacher or a librarian. Neither have I been a parent. I am a creative writer and a literature scholar. Although I can easily relate to the themes explored in this thesis, I have remained an external observer trying to understand how meanings of violence are interpreted by the gatekeepers of children's literature. Many questions trouble me. What makes controversial picturebooks suitable for children? What causes some picturebooks to be seen as *senior* or even *inappropriate*? What are the expectations of gatekeepers of children's literature toward picturebooks written for children? What are the implications for me as a writer, for the research participants - teachers and librarians - and for the broader community of writers, publishers, educators and parents?

1.1. Chapter Overview

This chapter sets the scene for the study, introduces the research questions and defines the main concepts relevant to this research. First, the research questions, the aims and the scope of the study are presented. Then, the significance of the study is outlined. Then, key definitions are provided, including: children's literature (CL), gatekeepers of children's literature, picturebooks, censorship and selection in children's literature, and violence. Finally, the thesis outline is presented.

1.2. Brief Summary of the Study

Gatekeepers' interpretations of violence in Australian and Ukrainian picturebooks are the central subject matter of this cross-cultural study, which sits at the crossroads of multidisciplinary qualitative research. One aim of the study is to explore how CL gatekeepers in educational settings – librarians and teachers – perceive fictional violence in picturebooks and illustrated collections of tales. The other aim is to examine how they make decisions about the age-appropriateness of the books. Additionally, the study aims to investigate how the picturebooks representing violence are curated and how young readers are supervised by the CL gatekeepers.

The qualitative study is informed by visual methodology and grounded theory. The research methods include the responsive interviewing model and thematic analysis. The participants of the study are 30 teachers and librarians from both Australia and Ukraine. The findings that emerged from the analysis may assist teachers, librarians and parents in becoming more aware of how picturebooks representing violence are selected and curated in libraries and schools. Furthermore, the study can offer new insights about the use of picturebooks featuring violence. In addition, because the study investigates the differences between the perceptions of fictional violence in Australian and Ukrainian contexts, it generates new knowledge about cross-cultural differences between the children's literatures of these two countries.

1.3. The Research Questions

The main research question of the study is: how do gatekeepers of children's literature in educational settings, who belong to different national cultures, guide young readers and curate picturebooks representing violence, based on the gatekeepers' perceptions of fictional violence? This research question includes the following queries:

1) Who are the gatekeepers of children's literature in educational settings in Australia and Ukraine?

2) What categories of ideal child readers are constructed by gatekeepers of children's literature in the context of reading picturebooks representing violence?

3) What are the defining features of a picturebook representing violence that influence gatekeepers' decisions about its age-appropriateness?

4) What are the differences and similarities in perceiving fictional violence in Australia and Ukraine? What is the role of culture when judging violence in picturebooks?

1.4. The Aims of the Study

The primary aims of the study are to explore how the gatekeepers of CL in educational settings interpret violence in CL, and how they make decisions about children's book appropriateness for certain ages. One aim is to examine gatekeepers' perceptions of fictional violence in picturebooks written for children. Another aim is to understand the perceptions gatekeepers hold about ideal child readers of picturebooks representing violence. In addition, the socio-cultural contexts influencing the decision-making process are studied.

Theoretically, the study aims to map gatekeepers' beliefs about CL, the red lines that should not be crossed in CL according to the gatekeepers, and the grey areas of semi-appropriate children's books. Examining ways in which violence is perceived in picturebooks

creates a landscape of human beliefs, values and experiences linked to the phenomenon. Also, it broadens the awareness of adults' beliefs about CL and the role of adult gatekeepers in it.

Practically, the study aims to explore possibilities for improving formal strategies of book selection. The findings may suggest some improvements for library collection development policies. Teachers may use the findings of the study when selecting books for their classroom discussions. Therefore, the overall objective is to explore selection processes related to Australian and Ukrainian CL, namely, to understand who makes the final decisions about the age-appropriateness of controversial picturebooks and on what grounds. This may lead to a better understanding of gatekeeping and guardianship in CL. The knowledge generated in this study may can be useful for future CL research and for stakeholders in education. Teachers and librarians can gain a better understanding of how they select and curate controversial picturebooks.

1.5. Significance

The study is situated within the constructionist paradigm. Therefore, its findings are subjective, interpretive and suggestive (Burr, 2015). The study explores the interpretations of violence by gatekeepers of CL. Perceptions of teachers and librarians on violence in picturebooks are analysed in accordance with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) informed by grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). This means the findings are heavily influenced by the researcher's views and beliefs.

The current study has emerged, first, as a result of my personal interest in representations and interpretations of controversial issues in CL and second, as a social demand for exploring the risks and benefits of sharing challenging subject matter with children. Moreover, studying controversial topics in picturebooks is a rapidly developing direction in contemporary research on CL (e.g., Beckett, 2012; Evans, 2015), and the topic is recognised by a broader research community as deserving further exploration.

To begin, as a creative writer who writes mostly for children, I have been wondering whether controversial themes (e.g., violence, death, sex) should appear on the pages of children's books and if so, how these topics should be represented. My personal experience of communicating with young readers at schools and in public libraries and with parents at

research conferences, public discussions and elsewhere shows that there is a gap between adults' and children's perceptions of controversial topics in CL. Hence, a topic that inspires so much debate is worth exploring in detail.

In addition, it is worth exploring the perceptions of gatekeepers. Previous research shows that teachers and librarians are often unwilling to read and discuss picturebooks featuring violence or other complicated topics with children; in some cases, adults might even hide the books from children (Evans, 2015; Freedman & Johnson, 2001; French, 2003; Marshall, 2015). One potential explanation may be that adults believe they need to protect children from offensive material (Heins, 2007). Indeed, it is a natural human desire to prevent children from being harmed. However, it is questionable whether exposure to picturebooks representing violence can cause harm. On the contrary, Nodelman and Reimer (2003) claim that controversial topics like death or violence should be discussed with children because to deprive them "of knowledge of painful or confusing matters they haven't yet experienced deprives them of the opportunity to prepare themselves to deal with those things in a conscious and careful manner when they do inevitably occur" (p. 103). Children might be exposed to physical, verbal or emotional violence, and therefore it is important to explore the reasons why some adults might be unwilling to discuss violence using picturebooks.

This study is a response to the unresolved conundrum of how picturebooks representing violence are curated in library collections and how they can be used in education. Picturebooks – and not other media – were selected as the focus of the study for several reasons. First, the processes of reading and discussing picturebooks depicting violence differ dramatically from children's exposure to violence on television or in computer games. While films and computer games use rapidly changing images and music to evoke rather predictable emotional responses (Verstraten, 2009, p. 160), reading picturebooks requires certain intellectual effort and a creative way of thinking to construct many possible meanings (Schwarcz & Schwarcz, 1991, pp. 11-13). Picturebooks grant the reader an opportunity to pause at any moment to discuss unclear events or to come back to certain text passages or illustrations and, perhaps, ask questions. Second, picturebooks were selected among other types of CL because picturebooks combine both visual and verbal narratives to communicate meanings. Previous research proves that it is important to consider both – visual and verbal – because children who are 7 or older use different moral

judgement strategies in situations when they are presented with imagery and text in comparison to situations when they are presented with text only (Chandler et al. 1973). Chandler et al. explain that children who listen to verbal narratives where one character harms another focus on the negative outcomes only; however, children who watch videos consider both outcomes and the intentions of the characters. More recent studies on moral judgement and the visual representations of violence were conducted by Coleman (2006) and Grizzard et al. (2018); both included adult participants. These studies demonstrate that visuals play very important roles in the formation of moral judgement of villain-characters and of a violent event. This means that the response to picturebooks representing violence may be more complex than to a text with no illustrations – both for children and adults.

In this study, I decided to exclude comics and graphic novels from the examples presented to the research participants and to focus on picturebooks and illustrated collections of tales. The main reason is that comics and graphic novels are often perceived as a genre selected and read by young readers without too much adult intrusion, whereas picturebooks are often selected and read for children by adults and then discussed with adults (Gibson, 2010; Haftfield, 2011). Although graphic novels, comics, picturebooks and illustrated books are read by readers of all ages, graphic novels can be perceived as being subversive and controversial, and picturebooks are mostly expected to be 'suitable' for children (Gibson, 2010) and educative (Haftfield, 2011). Therefore, it is important to understand how adults select picturebooks with controversial themes.

There are several reasons for choosing Australia and Ukraine for the study. The first reason is my personal interest in and familiarity with both cultures. The second reason is that the Australian and Ukrainian authors represent violence differently (Pavlyshyn, 2016). Because the Australian educators express their willingness to use controversial picturebooks in a classroom (Booker, 2012), the Australian authors sometimes allow violence to become a central theme of their realistic picturebooks (Bishop, 2016; Britten, 2021; Kerby et al. 2017). The Ukrainian authors are more likely to represent psychological rather than physical violence, and the theme or violence is often peripheral or omitted (Kachak, 2014; Shchur, 2017). This can suggest that the Australian and Ukrainian gatekeepers would have different experiences with these picturebooks, and their perceptions of violence in picturebooks would differ too. The third reason is that only a narrow segment of the Australian population is familiar with the Ukrainian culture and CL, and not many Ukrainians have a

deep understanding of the Australian culture and picturebooks. Consequently, the Australian participants of the study were likely to perceive Ukrainian picturebooks as unusual and alien; the Ukrainian participants were likely to perceive the Australian picturebooks as unfamiliar. The comparison of these two rather distinct cultures might bring a better understanding of how gatekeeping of CL works in Australia and Ukraine, and the contrasts between Australian and Ukrainian perceptions may identify unique features of each context.

Finally, the exploration of controversial topics in CL in general, as well as in picturebooks in particular, has intensified in the last two decades (e.g., Beckett, 2012; Bengtsson, 2009; Bjorvand, 2010; Evans, 2015; Kummerling-Meibauer, 2014; Lehr, 1995; Reynolds, 2007). Discussing why picturebooks with controversial and challenging topics are worth studying, Evans (2015) says that a lot of these picturebooks "are truly polysemic. They compel the reader to respond to them and ask questions … [they are] dealing with fundamental issues and asking 'big questions' which often form the basis of life" (p. 4). Clearly, books that may provide a reader with opportunities for personal growth and development should be studied. Although there are some studies conducted on controversial Australian and Ukrainian picturebooks (such as Kummerling-Meibauer & Meibauer, 2015; Świetlicki, 2019, 2020), this is a comparatively new area of research which requires further exploration.

In conclusion, there are individual, social and academic reasons for pursuing the study on violence in Ukrainian and Australian picturebooks and illustrated collections of tales. The study is significant in its exploration of a rapidly developing segment of CL research and its examination of a valuable problem in teaching challenging literature to children. Lastly, the study focuses on the picturebook, a well-studied multimodal medium in two cultures which, although present in the current research, deserves more scholarly attention.

1.6. Cross-cultural Nature of the Study

This study engages in cross-cultural research. Scholars agree that culture, in a broad sense, is an inseparable component of CL studies (Nikolajeva, 2010; Ray, 2005; Zipes, 2012). Ray (2005) explains that the production of CL depends on economic and socio-historical

conditions, therefore each country has its unique history of CL (p. 646). Also, Nikolajeva (2010) says that CL usually reflects habits, practices and traditions specific for a particular national culture (p. 38). In addition, Zipes (2012) argues that perceptions of the world and interpretations of stories are rooted in culture, since "children are born into a particular cultural niche that will influence how they begin to know the world and benefit from the cumulative heritage of culture" (p. 7). As a result, children who often do not know much about cultures other than their own, perceive text through the lens of their own culture; adults who grow up in a certain culture develop a particular way of interpreting CL.

There are innumerable ways to define culture. In this study, culture is seen as a software of mind (Hofstede, 1980) influencing people's thoughts, values, and beliefs; it is also seen as a set of symbolic systems (Geertz, 1973), and as social practices (Swidler, 1986) that are constantly emerging, changing and disappearing within a particular society. These three understandings of culture are used simultaneously in this study.

To define culture as a software of mind (Hofstede, 1980) means to see it as "patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting" that distinguish members of one nation from the others (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 5-6). Culture is learnt. Members of a community share a set of beliefs and practices which manifest themselves in acknowledging shared national symbols, heroes, rituals and values. Viewing culture from the national perspective may seem outdated, however it is valuable for this study, because it emphasises the importance of culture and language in understanding the perceptions of gatekeepers. According to Crozet (2003), "cultural traits as found in language use can be interpreted … as the expression of the different values members of a given society attach to the concepts of "self" and "other" (p. 39). Consequently, both culture and language influence the ways in which readers construct meaning of a text.

Contrary to classifying culture on the basis of national or ethnic origin, seeing culture as symbolic systems or "socially established structures of meaning" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10) draws upon the idea that cultures can cross national borders. Culture as a system of symbols means that people interpret reality in a certain way, not only according to their national origin, but also in accordance with their educational background, social class, religion and other identity markers. This is a valuable notion for the current study because it explains similarities in the responses of research participants from the different countries who belong to the same occupation.

Understanding culture as social practices recognises culture as a set of "symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems" (Swidler, 1986, p. 273). The difference between this perspective and that of the previous definitions is its consideration of the dynamic nature of cultures: over time, new cultures and sub-cultures may emerge, change and disappear. Additionally, viewing culture as social practices emphasises the unpredictability of individual responses from representatives of the same culture. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) say, "Different interpretations may be made of the same events by individuals who may be considered to be from the same culture" (p. 21). This means that even though two different cultures are compared and contrasted in this study, it is not expected that the borders between representations and perceptions typical for Ukrainian and Australian picturebooks will be defined clearly and definitively. Instead, the study targets the observation of prominent patterns and tendencies for each culture despite the diversity of individual perceptions and the blurred nature of people's cultural identities in these countries.

The Australian and Ukrainian cultures are different in several ways. One important distinction that emerged between Australian and Ukrainian cultures is the representation of war in contemporary picturebooks. My previous research shows that in Australian picturebooks, war is represented as a distant memory from the past, whereas in Ukrainian picturebooks, war is represented as a vivid and painful phenomenon that can happen anytime and anywhere; these differences are represented in the choice of characters, settings, and colours (see Pavlyshyn, 2020). A possible explanation for such representations can be found in the current political situation of both countries: while Australia commemorates the bravery of the ANZAC soldiers during the First World War annually; Ukraine is currently protecting its borders from Russian military invasion, and war is perceived as an everyday threat.

At the same time, Australia and Ukraine share some similarities. Australian and Ukrainian literatures are sometimes seen as postcolonial (Moruzi & Smith, 2014; Pavlyshyn, 1992; Shkandrij, 2007) and as such they have inherited certain cultural baggage from the past. Analysing colonial girlhood in Australian, Canadian and New Zealand fiction, history and culture in the 19th and 20th centuries, Moruzi and Smith (2014) note that "the effects of British colonialism did not cease to have repercussions at the precise moment when colonies became nations" (p. 10). Indeed, some British influences can still be noticed in

Australian CL today. Ukrainian literature may be seen as postcolonial due to its multiculturalism and the pluralism of ideologies conveyed by its narratives (Shkandrij, 2007). However, it is debatable if Ukraine itself should be called a postcolonial country. Hrytsak (2015) argues that "within the Russian empire and the Soviet Union, Ukraine was more core than colony" (p. 733). However, according to Shkandrij (2007), the Russian belief of "the non-existence of a Ukrainian language and identity, and the criminal nature of any independent Ukrainian military - are key elements in the imperial/colonial discourse" (p. 83), and therefore some Ukrainian literature can be seen as postcolonial.

To summarise, the cross-cultural nature of this study seeks to compare and contrast gatekeepers' interpretations of fictional violence in Australia and Ukraine. Culture in this study is seen as a set of beliefs and values, patterns of thinking and feeling, and social practices that impact interpretations of literature.

1.7. Socio-cultural Context of the Study

The study takes place in two socio-cultural contexts: Australia and Ukraine. This section outlines some major differences that may influence gatekeepers' perceptions of violence. It includes a brief overview of languages, history, current political situation, as well as differences between the organisation of the two educational systems and library systems in Australia and Ukraine.

1.7.1. Australian Context

This section briefly outlines some ideas about the English language, Australian history and Australia's current political situation. It also provides some information about the history of Australian picturebooks, the Australian educational system and librarianship. Because the study discusses interpretations of several Australian picturebooks and the majority of Australian participants were born in Australia, the contextual elements discussed here are important for the research.

English was used during the interviews with Australian participants. Since language influences the way people express their thoughts and represent reality (Crozet, 2003), it is essential to take it into consideration. Australians read books published in Australia, the USA, the UK and other English-speaking countries, including books written by local authors as well as translations. Recently, books translated from other languages into English have been gaining popularity in Australia (Whitmore, 2018). Therefore, the reading experience of the interviewed Australian gatekeepers was likely shaped by books written in English, which encompass literature written by Australian authors and authors who belong to other cultural backgrounds.

In addition, Australian picturebooks available on the shelves of libraries and bookstores are written in English, a Western Germanic language with a rather rigid structure and almost no gendered nouns. Furthermore, not only do Australian children read books written by Australian authors, they also read books created by British, American, and other authors. For example, one survey (Renaissance Accelerated Reader, 2018) showed that the books most read by Australian children at the age from 4 to 8 were created by Dr. Seuss (the USA), Pamela Allen (New Zealand), Mem Fox (Australia), P.D. Eastman (the USA), and Sally Rippin (Australia), and the books most read by Australian children from 9 to 12 were written by Andy Griffiths (Australia), Jeff Kinney (the USA), Roald Dahl (the UK), Anh Do (Vietnamese-born Australian author), and Sally Rippin (Australia). This suggests the degree of cultural diversity Australian children are exposed to, and supports the idea that Australian children mostly read picturebooks written in English, although their authors are not always Australians.

Picturebooks written in English have a long-lasting literary tradition. The first illustrated books aimed at children appeared in the 17th century (Nodelman, 1988). The period from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century is usually recognised as the golden age of children's books (Salisbury & Styles, 2012). In the 20th and 21st centuries, authors, illustrators, editors and publishers have been investing their time, effort and money into creating millions of titles written in English, which, according to some scholars, creates certain challenges for the book selection process (Bucher & Hinton, 2010). The first Australian picturebook is claimed to be *Cole's Funny Picture Book: The Funniest Picture Book in the World* (1879), an illustrated collection of stories written for children and belonging to different genres (Bunbury, 2005). The history of the Australian picturebook is

linked to such canonical Australian authors and illustrators as Norman Lindsay, Dorothy Wall, May Gibbs and Pixie O'Harris, Rentoul Outhwaite, Robert Ingpen, and others who made this type of book popular among readers and respected by scholars. For example, it is said that "May Gibbs's 'gumnut babies' from *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie* (1918) have become Australian icons — while the 'banksia men' remained in hidden adult fears remembered from childhood" (Bunbury, 2005, p. 836). The canonical Australian picturebook *Magic Pudding* (1918) by Norman Lindsay contains both humour and adventure, and can be entertaining for children and adults; it set a trend for many picturebooks that followed. Overall, Australian CL combined some European traditions with native Australian landscapes and themes; the characters of Australian picturebooks often include kangaroos, wallabies, koalas, wombats, dingos and other native species (Stone, 1995, p. 326). Starting from the 1970s, picturebook publishing developed rapidly with Australian picturebooks gaining national and international recognition. The Children's Book Council of Australia, established in 1945, recognised the Australian picturebook as an independent type of book worthy of separate awards; Australian author and illustrator Robert Ingpen won a prestigious international Hans Christian Andersen Award in 1986. Australian picturebooks represent some ethnic and cultural diversity (Stone, 1995) and some Aboriginal stories have been published as picturebooks and illustrated books (Bunbury, 2005); however, these are still in the minority compared to picturebooks with stories representing white Australians.

The historical heritage of Australia is shaped by its colonial past. Australia's close historical ties to Britain are reflected in the ongoing legacies of British culture in mainstream Australian culture. Molony (2005) explains, "Much that was here [in Australia] when the first settlers came remained intact, while vital elements of the culture and tradition they brought with them from the British Isles had been preserved" (p. 354). As an influence, some British picturebooks are popular with young Australian readers – as is evident from research (e.g., Painter et al., 2013), and some classics of British CL have been taught at schools (McLean Davies, 2019).

The current state of political affairs may also influence the way people think. Australia is a constitutional monarchy. It consists of 6 states (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia) and 2 territories (Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory) – which have state governments and legislation. In addition, Australia has a federal government. There are several ethnic groups living in

Australia. In the 18th century, the Australia's First Nations People[1] were joined by white settlers – British, Irish, Dutch, French and other mostly Western European people. In the 20th century, immigration waves from Western and Eastern Europe and later on from Asia changed the ethno-cultural landscape of modern Australia and enriched its culture. Nowadays, Australia is a multicultural country with a great diversity of cultures, ethnicities, religions and languages.

The history of violence in Australia can be linked to wars, domestic violence and suicide. Australian war memories include the memory of the "Black War" between white settlers and Australian First Nations Peoples, the First World War, the Second World War, the Vietnam war, and others. War memories of the 19th century have been somewhat silenced until recently. Examining the war between white settlers and Tasmanian Aboriginal people, Clements (2014) explains that there was a lot of fear, anxiety, sadness and uncertainty on both sides:

> The near extermination of the Tasmanians cannot help but evoke emotions such as guilt, sadness and contempt in any feeling person. Yet it is misleading to think of the Black War as a battle between good and evil... Partially everyone saw themselves as victims. White and black alike, most were just trying to survive the nightmare in which they found themselves. There were of course many cruel individuals, but they too were victims of the circumstances, assumptions, hatreds, frustrations, fears and sadness... The war was at once the effect and the cause of unfold suffering, fear and malice. It was an extraordinary event that drove ordinary people to do the unthinkable. (Clements, 2014, p. 209)

The Black War in Tasmania is rarely if at all depicted in picturebooks. Although I presume some metaphorical representations might be present, I have not encountered any picturebooks explicitly portraying the Tasmanian Black War. Perhaps this is because the historical events remain problematic and underexplored. It is now acknowledged that until the 1820s, the Australian First Nations Peoples were perceived as peaceful and harmless (Reynolds, 2012, p. 50). They tried to avoid contact with the white settlers, while practising

[1] also referred to as Indigenous Australians or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

their cultures and maintaining their traditional lifestyles, which included hunting, fishing, and foraging. However, the population of white settlers in Tasmania grew from 5,400 to 24,000 between 1820 and 1830 (Reynolds, 2012), which meant that the land previously used for hunting and traveling, now was used for farming. Consequently, "avoidance became increasingly difficult. Traditional patterns of hunting, gathering and travel where disrupted. Conflict intensified; mutual hostility spiralled out of control" (Reynolds, 2021, p. 8), and violent interactions between the Australian First Nations Peoples and white settlers became more common.

Furthermore, Reynolds (2021) explains that even though the events of 1823-1837 used to be seen as *frontier conflicts* by the historians at the beginning of the 20th century, or as a *guerrilla war* (McMahon, 1995), they are now recognised as a *war* because the primary aim of Aboriginal resistance was to defend their land and the lives of their families. The outcomes were horrifying. It is known that "170 settlers were killed, 200 were wounded and a further 225 were harassed or threatened in one way or another" (Reynolds, 2012, p. 52). The losses for the Tasmanian Aboriginal people were even greater:

> The 'Black War', which engulfed much of central and eastern Tasmania between 1823 and 1831, was the most intense and lethal struggle in the long history of Australia's frontier conflict … By the end of the war there were only twenty-six of their [Aboriginal] countrymen and women alive, sixteen men, nine women and one child. Their nation [*palawa* or *pakana* people] would have numbered about 1,000 when the British arrived on the island. (Reynolds, 2021, p. 8)

The survivors of the war were displaced to Flinders Island. Neath (2012) encapsulates the events that followed after the end of the Black War as follows:

> [Missionary] Robinson befriended the enemy, convinced them to leave their country, and then betrayed the friendship by not keeping his promise of return. The result was Manalargenna and his people were incarcerated at the Aboriginal establishment on Flinders Island in the Bass Strait and left to die. (p. 310)

In contrast to the Black War, the First World War is remembered and commemorated on a large scale. The ANZACs (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) are believed to be co-founders of *the Australian myth* and major contributors to shaping a sense of Australian mateship and an "all-inclusive experience of Australian multicultural togetherness" (Fischer, 2012, p. 226). In addition, it is said that:

> The courage and endurance of the Anzacs had been staggering as, with their agonies and fears shrouded in sardonic good humor, they endured the impossible ... The word 'Anzac' and 'Gallipoli' where etched in the memory of the nation while the dead of the Peninsula became, in time, a symbol and measure to test its quality. From the agony of those months, no nation was created because such a thing happens only through the unity of people with its land and with each other. Nevertheless a precious bond among Australians was formed on the bloodied slopes of Gallipoli and the Anzac legend speaks truly for its bearers walked upright, fine and noble of bearing as they went to death, to maiming and defeat. (Molony, 2005, p. 225)

The First World War has been represented in Australian CL more often than other wars because it consisted of specific battles that could be depicted (Johnston & Paul, 2014) and had voluntarily enlistment (Mosse, 1990), whereas later wars were partially guerrilla wars and did not have as clearly defined historical events or heroes. As a result, the First World War became a part of Australian collective memory able to structure multiple events into coherent narratives and to better understand the past (Darian-Smith, 1994). Memories of wars generated numerous cultural symbols, heroes and silences, which might influence how war is perceived by Australians.

In addition to war violence, Australians can relate to domestic and self-directed violence. According to the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre, the level of abuse and domestic violence in Australia is quite high. The National Homicide Monitoring Program shows that the overall numbers of homicide incidents dropped in the last 30 years from 339 in 1989-90 to 267 in 2018-2019; however, these numbers are still alarming, especially if taking into account that 34% of them were domestic homicides, and 37% were acquaintance homicides (Bricknell & Doherty, 2021). Additionally, Indigenous Australians

are more likely to become victims of family violence than white Australians, and they are nearly nine times more likely to die as a consequence of domestic violence (Al-Yaman et al., 2006; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2020). Due to cultural differences, the standardised strategies for family violence prevention do not work in the Indigenous communities (Cheers et al., 2006). Furthermore, the rates of "domestic and family violence in regional, rural and remote locations are higher than in urban areas" (Campo & Tayton, 2015, p. 7). This leads to a conclusion that some Australians are likely to be exposed to domestic violence as victims or witnesses. The chances of the exposure are higher in rural and regional areas such as Tasmania.

Suicide remains a substantial social problem in Australia too. While Australian women are more likely to become victims of domestic homicide than men (Bricknell & Doherty, 2021), men are more likely to suffer from self-directed violence (Milner et al., 2017). Also, suicide is the leading cause of children's death in Australia. In 2019, there were 96 cases of child suicide, where 80% occurred between the ages 15 to 17 (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2020). The other vulnerable category of Australians who are likely to die from suicide are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples since self-directed violence was among the five leading causes of death for these groups in 2019 (ABS, 2020; AIHW, 2020). The overall number of deaths caused by intentional self-harm across all categories rose from 2,480 in 2010 to 3,318 in 2019 (ABS, 2020). Self-inflicted violence is an ongoing concern in Australia.

The other contextual element necessary to examine is education. The educational system of Australia consists of two sectors: public and private. Prior to 1788, Australian First Nations children received were receiving different types of education which depended on their place of birth, local culture and language spoken, as First Nations People in Australia spoke around 300 major languages (Campbell & Proctor, 2014, p. 3). In the 1850s, Roman Catholics and Anglicans established the first private schools in Australia; in the 1870s, the first public primary school appeared and in 1901, public high schools were established in Australia (Vandenberg, 2018, p. 59). Naturally, the educational institutions of the time were influenced by the British tradition and they sometimes followed elements of the British educational system. Contemporary Australian educational institutions for children include public schools and libraries funded by the Australian government, while private schools are often associated with religions of various denominations. In addition, home schooling is

possible in Australia. “Australia is internationally unusual in its high proportions of students enrolled in non-government schools… it is clear that the numbers of children receiving a religiously influenced schooling have increased since the 1980s, and this trend shows every indication of continuing” (Campbell & Proctor, 2014, p. 263). Children are schooled from age 4-5 to 18-19 depending on the state or territory. According to ACARA (the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority), children from the foundation year to year 10 are expected to master three strands of English: language, literacy and literature. Some translations of world literature might be taught during English classes along with books written by Australian, British, American and Canadian authors. The national curriculum provides teachers with guidance about the competencies which must be mastered by children at certain ages. However, individual teachers are responsible for selecting books for their students to read and discuss. Picturebooks are used in Australian primary school classrooms (Booker, 2012). Some high school teachers also use picturebooks; a common choice in high schools is *The Rabbits* (2010) by John Marsden and Shaun Tan (Young, 2015). Not all Australian schools have libraries. Those schools with libraries may employ a teacher-librarian who gives library lessons to children. During those lessons, the teacher-librarian may recommend books to children and discuss them with young readers.

Australian librarians can seek further professional development, access to academic journals, and opportunities for networking through their membership in the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA). Also, the ALIA issues *The Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association (JALIA)* and *INCITE* magazine to inform its members about the recent news, and developments in the field of librarianship. Australian public libraries are often shared spaces where CL co-exists with adults’ literature. Based on my observations, one room (sometimes one floor) is usually devoted to children’s and young adult literature, including picturebooks, and the rest of the space is given to mainstream literature, including books, newspapers, DVDs and other materials. The picturebooks are often separated from novels and other types of books. Based on my observation, young children in Australia usually visit public libraries with parents or a teacher.

1.7.2. Ukrainian Context

The Ukrainian picturebooks discussed in this study are written in Ukrainian and the majority of the participants were born in Ukraine. Therefore, Ukrainian history, picturebook history, current political situation, educational systems and practices of librarianship are very briefly discussed here. Naturally, all these factors impact the findings in this study.

The official language of Ukraine is Ukrainian as stated in the Ukrainian Constitution. The Ukrainian language belongs to the Slavic language family (Olszanski, 2012) and, consequently, it uses alphabet, grammar and word formation principles very different from English. For example, unlike English, Ukrainian language has a rather flexible sentence structure, and Ukrainian nouns have gender. This might influence both the terms and their perception in translation from English to Ukrainian and vice versa.

The tradition of published illustrated books for children in Ukraine is well-established. The first illustrated book targeted at adults (an illustrated Alphabet with short narratives written in Cyrillic) was published by Ivan Fedorov in 1574 in Lviv, Western Ukraine (Isayevych, 2002, pp. 116-117). Between the 16th and 18th centuries, the majority of printed literature served either religious or educational purposes and targeted both adults and children (Ovchinnikov, 2005). In the 19th century, canonical Ukrainian authors Marko Vovchok, Ivan Franko, Lesysa Ukrainka and others started writing tales, stories and poems for children. In the 20th century, the tradition of published illustrated children's books was firmly established (Ovchinnikov, 2005). A number of magazines publishing CL appeared, for example, the magazines *Red Flowers* (1923), *Bilshovenya* (1925) and *Zhovtenya* (1928) were founded (Strushliak, 2009). Among the influential magazines of CL in independent Ukraine were *Barvinok* (published since 1945) and *Soniashnyk* (published since 1990), which published richly illustrated tales, stories and poems. Nowadays, Ukraine has several publishing houses exclusively producing CL. The book range includes Ukrainian texts, translations into Ukrainian from various languages, bilingual books and books published in languages other than Ukrainian. While 32-page picturebooks are a commonly published medium in Australia, it is common in Ukraine to publish traditional picturebooks and much longer illustrated collections of tales and stories where words and images complement, enhance and elaborate each other as in picturebooks. Furthermore, picturebooks and illustrated collections of tales play similar functions in the lives of young Ukrainian readers:

these illustrated collections are read by the Ukrainian children and used in education. For this reason, I decided to include Ukrainian illustrated tales along with picturebooks in this study.

The privileges of publishing and reading books in their mother tongue has not always been granted to the Ukrainians. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Eastern Ukraine was under the rule of the Russian Empire (Wilson, 2002). The Russian Czar, Alexander II, issued and signed two documents, the Valuev Circular (1863) and the Ems Decree (1876). According to the Valuev Circular (1863), any educational, religious or entertaining literature published in Ukrainian was banned; Ems Ukaz (1876) was a prohibition of any literature published or reprinted in Ukrainian (Hrytsak, 1996). Although, the decree and the circular affected publication of Ukrainian literature within the Russian Empire, publishing continued in Western Ukraine within the Austria-Hungarian Empire, in Galicia (Plokhy, 2015, p. 170).

After the revolution of 1917, Ukraine was invaded by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union period was marked by massive political repressions where children and adults were deported to Siberia and imprisoned or killed due to being Ukrainians (Zhukov & Talibova, 2018; Snyder, 2010). First, the Great Famine called Holodomor (1932-1933) was a famine artificially amplified by governmental policies during which millions of Ukrainians who lived in rural areas were starved to death (Conquest, 1986; Marples, 2007). Conquest (1986) explains that "a whole generation of rural [Ukrainian] children… was destroyed or maimed… both the shrinkage of a generation and [traumatic] experiences of the survivors have effects which are still felt" (p. 283). In addition, the mass killing of Ukrainians continued during the Soviet Union due to the mass repressions, deportations and the involvement of the Soviet Union in the Second World War (Snyder, 2010). "In, 1937 and 1938, a quarter of million Soviet citizens were shot on essentially ethnic grounds" (Snyder, 2010, p. 118). Ukrainian soldiers participated in both the First World War and the Second World War; moreover, the military operations took place on the territory of Ukraine. As a result, Ukraine has a generation of those who have preserved war in their memories of childhood and who write about war in their books for various audiences.

Although the process of creating books for children was disrupted by war and other calamities, Ukrainian CL continued to be published during the Soviet Union period (Ray, 2005). The books were subsidised by the government, however, they were also censored, as many children's books were used as a tool for political propaganda (e.g., to glorify

communism). Today's Ukraine can be seen a post-Soviet Union state with all the consequences for cultural and social-political preferences of its citizens (Dyczok, 2014, pp. 100-102). The influences of some Soviet ideas may still be visible in some Ukrainian views today.

Ukraine[2] gained its independence in 1991 (Wilson, 2002). Now, it is an independent sovereign state situated in Europe with 7 neighbouring countries (Magosci, 2007). In 2004, the Orange Revolution happened; in 2014, the Euromaidan Revolution (also known as the Revolution of Dignity) took place (Plokhy, 2015). Both revolutions started as street protests against non-democratic presidential elections and social injustice. Despite some similarities, these revolutions have a number of differences:

> The first difference is that it [Euromaidan Revolution] lasted for three months which was far longer than the seventeen-day Orange Revolution. The second was that unlike earlier 'colour revolutions' in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine the Euromaidan did not take place within an election cycle. The third factor, following on from the previous, was that the Euromaidan was driven as much by national liberation as it was by European integration and human rights. Political repression, the creation of a 'mafia state' and return to neo-Soviet nationality and language policies culminated in an angrier population… The fourth was that the Euromaidan was violent with the deaths of over one hundred protestors and nearly 20 law enforcement officers. Earlier 'colour revolutions' had been led by NGOs and opposition leaders committed to nonviolent strategies and in 2004 … The fifth factor was that opposition leaders led the Orange Revolution while the Euromaidan was driven by NGOs, civil society and journalists. (Kuzio, 2017, pp. 9-10)

Since 2014, Ukraine has been impacted by the Russian military intervention sometimes referred to as *hybrid warfare* (Lanoszka, 2016). More than 10,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed protecting the Ukrainian border (Bluszcz & Valente, 2019). The

[2] Although historically, Ukraine has been referred to as "the Ukraine", in this thesis I follow a well-established scholarly tradition adopted in Ukrainian studies (Magosci, 2007; Plokhy, 2015; Snyder, 2010) and use the word "Ukraine".

military conflict started with the annexation of Crimea by the Russian military troops in 2014, and was followed by further military invasion on the East of Ukraine. It is said that:

> The annexation of Crimea led to further tensions in the Russian-Ukrainian relations. On April 7, 2014, pro-Kremlin protesters occupied government buildings in Kharkiv, Donetsk and Luhansk demanding a referendum for autonomy in Eastern Ukraine. This time, the Ukrainian armed forces were mobilized to defend the country. In mid-April, Kiev launched an 'anti-terrorist operation' to regain control of public buildings in the area. On May 11, however, the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics were established following the organization of referendums in Donetsk and Luhansk regions (Karagiannis, 2016, p. 142)

The events of 2014 and the following years have been represented in Ukrainian picturebooks, for example, *The War that Changed Rondo* (2015) and *My Father Became a Star* (2015). Świetlicki (2019) claims that prior to 2014, controversial topics were rarely depicted in Ukrainian picturebooks published after 1991, and only after the Euromaidan revolution, topics like death and war entered the realm of contemporary Ukrainian literature for children (p. 204). Furthermore, it is noticed that while war in *The War that Changed Rondo* (2015) is represented in a universal and idealistic way, where no one dies (Świetlicki, 2019, p. 199), picturebooks like *My Father Became a Star* (2015) represent war more realistically by mentioning real geographic locations and featuring death. Both books are often recognised as outstanding by being awarded literary awards; they are present in Ukrainian public libraries.

Nowadays, the educational system of Ukraine consists of public schools and libraries, which vary in type and purpose, as well as private schools. Children may attend kindergarten, where they learn basic competencies and literacies, from the age of 3 to 6 or 7. Nonetheless, the responsibilities of ensuring adequate mental, intellectual, social and moral development are held by parents. Children are schooled from the ages of 6-7 to 18-19. The majority of schools in Ukraine are public. The private schools are often associated with a deeper focus on learning art, mathematics and physics, and foreign languages. Alternatively, there is home schooling for a small number of children: parents hire several teachers to teach their children; therefore, this system looks more like private tutoring than traditional schooling. The majority of schools have a school library at their premises and a

literature classroom usually has an additional collection of books. The typical library collection at school consists of the books assigned by the National school curriculum and some contemporary CL, including works by Ukrainian authors and translations.

Until recently, schools have been expected to follow the National curriculum providing teachers a list of textbooks and recommended literature. Teachers have had the flexibility to choose how they would like to teach the assigned texts. The Ukrainian language, English language, Ukrainian literature and World literature have been taught as separate subjects. To the best of my knowledge, both literature subjects could be called the history of literature because they include only a few contemporary texts. The majority of books studied by Ukrainian children are significant works of art including prose, poetry and drama. During World literature and Ukrainian literature classes, children are introduced to classical literature written from the 19th to the 20th centuries. This system is changing at the moment, as the Ministry of Education of Ukraine is in the process of reforming the system; the new approach is similar to Australia where the curriculum specifies competencies, and teachers have an opportunity to choose books, textbooks and other materials they use in a classroom (Hrynevych et al., 2016, p. 25). Therefore, my study can assist Ukrainian educators as they transition from a centralised curriculum-centred book selection to autonomous book selection.

There are several types of public libraries in Ukraine: libraries for adults, libraries for youth, libraries for children and children's and youth libraries. There are also public libraries, school libraries, university libraries, and libraries with special collections. Usually, these libraries are situated in separate buildings and serve different purposes. The adults' libraries are quiet places for reading and researching printed materials. My observations of Ukrainian libraries for children and youth showed that the children's libraries and libraries for young adults are lively, colourful and noisy spaces. Children who are younger than 6-7 visit the libraries with their parents. Children older than this can go to the library on their own. Often, young readers spend their leisure time in the library, reading, drawing, performing drama and playing games, being supervised by the librarians. This means that the librarians have plenty of opportunities to recommend books to children, and children have enough time to select books they want to read which are available in the open access collections.

Ukrainian librarians can seek support and professional development advice from the Ukrainian Library Association (the ULA). The ULA was founded in 1995 and it created the

Code of Ethics for Ukrainian librarians in 1996, with the latest edition issued in 2013 [Ukrainian Library Association, 2021]. In addition, it has been organising academic conferences and public discussions, publishing materials for professional development, and managing various social projects. For example, since 2001, the ULA has been successful in finding sponsors and partners for providing more than 2,000 Ukrainian libraries with Internet connections and computers.

Picturebooks and illustrated collections of tales and poems are popular in Ukraine; nevertheless, picturebooks are rarely used in school (Vzdulska, 2016). The lists of authors and titles of texts recommended to years 2-4 and 5-6 students by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education (available on the MOE web-site) indicate different types of narratives: verbal texts with no illustrations (for example, some classical short stories, myths and legends), illustrated collections of stories (for example, Ukrainian fairy tales), and picturebooks written by contemporary authors. However, the picturebooks are in minority. Because illustrated books are used at the Ukrainian classroom as often as picturebooks, if not more often, I have used Ukrainian picturebooks and illustrated collections in this study. The illustrated books generally have more pages than traditional picturebooks. The font is usually smaller. Each tale, story or poem has one or two illustrations only. These illustrated books are targeted at family readers or for advanced readers who learn to read very early. In Ukraine, the average age when children learn to read fluently is 6-7 years; however, some children learn to read at the age of 3-4. This can be explained by the fact that Ukrainian is a phonetic language, and there is not much difference between spelling and pronunciation.

The motivation to read vary for different age groups of the Ukrainian young readers. Volosevych and Shurenkova (2020) claim that only 31% of surveyed Ukrainian children between ages 6 and 9 read for pleasure. The majority of children of this age group said they were encouraged or forced to read by their parents and teachers. However, 52% of 10- to 15-year-olds reported that they read for pleasure and they often specified which genres of books they like reading; the other 48% said they read only because their parents force them. The majority of children of different age groups who participated in the survey conducted by Volosevych & Shurenkova (2020) said they did not like books from the national school curriculum.

1.7.3. Cross-cultural Differences: Implications

This brief overview of the history of Australian and Ukrainian cultures highlights several differences that might influence the findings of the study. The language, the colonial past, memories and perceptions of war, selected educational systems and librarian practices – all these are different in Australia and Ukraine. It is anticipated that the interpretation of war in Australian and Ukrainian picturebooks will be different, and that other types of violence in picturebooks might be perceived similarly.

1.8. Key Terms

This study is positioned within the research fields of children's literature, education and librarianship. The key terms defined here are: children's literature, gatekeepers of children's literature, picturebooks, censorship and selection of picturebooks, and violence.

1.8.1. Children's Literature (CL)

Children's literature (CL) is an elusive concept. There is an enduring debate on how to define it (e.g., Cadden, 2010; Grenby, 2008; Gubar, 2011; Hintz, 2020; Hughes, 1978; Townsend, 1971; Zipes, 2001). One possible definition is that CL is literature written *for* children. Indeed, CL is usually seen as literature written, edited, illustrated, published, reviewed and bought by adults, and read by children (Evans, 2015; Townsend, 1971; Zipes, 2001). However, this is not always the case, as CL can offer "art, wisdom, beauty, melancholy, hope, and insight for readers of *all* ages" (Nel, 2015, p. 88) and therefore, CL is read and enjoyed by adults too (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003).

CL differs from literature for adults. Tucker (1990) explains that CL is not the same as literature for adults mainly because child-readers have different needs and tastes than adult readers. However, this statement can be challenged since not all children have the same tastes and needs. Nel (2015) argues that CL is "a literature for an audience whose tastes, reading ability, socio-economic status, hobbies, health, culture, interests, gender, home life, nationality, and race vary widely" (p. 87). Therefore, although some scholars agree that CL has a defined readership, other would disagree.

Furthermore, scholars tend to distinguish CL from YA literature, saying that these two

types of literature address different problems. YA literature is sometimes defined as "potent and transformative" literature (Talley, 2011, p. 232) that deals with issues relevant to teenagers (Bucher & Hinton, 2010, pp. 3-5), or as a literature that explores the problem of identity in a contemporary world (Falconer, 2010, p. 88). In contrast, CL is expected to represent themes, issues, and problems which are of interest to the child-readers, therefore to readers who are 12 or younger. However, this point of distinguishment is slightly problematic because of a category of readers referred to as "the cross-*reader* of children's and young adult literature" (Falconer, 2010, p. 160); this category includes children who read CL and YA literature, and teenagers who read books aimed at children, and books written with young adults in mind.

The term "children" in CL can be perceived in different ways. Reynolds (2011b) offers several questions that highlight multiple ways in which children can be seen in the CL research:

> Which children are being studied: child characters in the texts? Child readers? If the latter, are these actual readers whose responses will be investigated, or implied readers, constructed in the narrative? And, when dealing with a book from the past, which real readers? The original children for whom a book was intended? Its current readers? Or both? How old are these children? Does age matter? (p. 4)

Ironically, literature written *by* children is rarely considered as CL (Gubar, 2011). Furthermore, real children not always become participants of CL research (Saguisag & Prickett, 2016). Some scholars perceive the exclusion of children participants from the studies focused on children as "adultism" (Bell, 2010; Bettencourt, 2020; Bertrand et al., 2020). Originally, the term "adultism" referred to dismissing children's rights to verbalise their needs and preferences (Bell, 2010). For example, in many Western countries school attendance is compulsory; however, children cannot choose learning styles or methods for themselves. Later, the concept of adultism was also applied to the participatory research that excludes children (Bettencourt, 2020). The argument was that adults should share the power of decision-making with children. Other scholars explain that although it would be valuable to hear more children's voices in the research, there are certain institutional barriers (e.g., ethics) and methodological issues associated with including children as

participants (Kirk, 2007; O'Reilly et al., 2013; Roberts, 2017). It is stated that in order to include children as research participants, the researchers must have an appropriate training to ensure that children can give informed consent and that the methods are suitable; also, such inclusion should be justified by the research questions (Roberts, 2017). In this study, the focus is on the gatekeepers of CL: on the gatekeepers' perceptions of books for children and on the readers of those books. The major reason for not including children as participants in this study is that the research questions are concerned with how adults exercise their power of decision-making when they select books for library collections. Although children influence gatekeepers' decisions, the books are selected and purchased by adults, not by children. Further research on how to discuss picturebooks with children should include the perspective of children.

The distinguishing feature of CL is that it usually portrays child-protagonists (Hintz, 2020); however, not all texts with a child as the main character belong to CL. Pondering about the definition for CL, Lurie (1990) says that:

> These works are not necessarily shorter or simpler than so-called adult fiction, and they are surely not less well written. The heroes and heroines… are often children: but so are the protagonists of Henry James's *What Maisie Knew*… Yet the barrier between children's books and adult fiction remains; editors, critics and readers seem to have little trouble in assigning a given work to one category or the other. (p. xiii)

Indeed, CL is a separate area of publishing and research, and there must be a reason for this. Grenby (2008) notes that CL "concerns itself with children's lives and views the world from their point of view" (p. 35). Therefore, children are narrators and focalisers in the texts belonging to CL: whatever children cannot notice is not mentioned in the story. By contrast, the novels written for adults may contain explicit references to sex and violence even if a narrator is a child (e.g., *Atonement* (2001) by Ian McEwan); the novels can include both child and adult focalisers to represent the multiple views.

Controversial topics such as violence, death, and sex are less common in CL in comparison to literature written for YA and adult readers. According to Nodelman (2015), literature written for children is "a category built on restrictions… defined by what it leaves

out" (p. 33). As a result, violence represented in picturebooks for children is seldom explicit; its identification requires a reading strategy that is sensitive to implications and subtexts.

The other unique characteristic of CL research is its multidisciplinary nature. Sarland (1999) explains that the "discourse on children's fiction sits at the crossroads of a number of other discourses" (p. 39). In addition, Hintz (2020) says that CL "is fully established across multiple disciplines and is constantly renewed by new methodologies and cultural concerns" (p. 158). Indeed, the research on CL requires a scholar to have knowledge of humanities, arts, education and psychology, because CL is expected to influence the reader's intellectual, creative, socio-cultural, moral and emotional development. Nikolajeva (1996) points out that CL has often been analysed according to its pedagogical properties, such as the presence of problematic ethical issues, and not according to literary characteristics like style, irony, language, innovations. This leads to incomplete interpretations of the text. Therefore, it is essential to recognise both components of a children's book: educational and aesthetic.

In conclusion, CL is a problematic term; however, scholars usually agree that it implies literature written for and read by children. CL rarely portrays death, sex and violence explicitly. As a result, it might be challenging to identify picturebooks representing violence. There are many methods for studying CL; the dominant approaches in contemporary research prioritise aesthetic features of the book or the reader's response to and interaction with the text.

1.8.2. Gatekeepers of Children's Literature

Gatekeeping is a significant issue in CL because "different adults have different ideas about what needs to be left out" of CL (Nodelman, 2015, p. 33). *Gatekeepers* of CL (Bottigheimer, 2010; Jenkins, 2011; Mercier, 2011) are adults who guide young readers into the world of literature. They may try to protect young readers from the negative impact of inappropriate literature and consequently deny or limit access to certain books. At the same time, however, they can encourage and support the diverse reader's interests despite the controversy surrounding certain books and, perhaps, mitigate potential harm by discussing books with children. Furthermore, these are the people who can influence ways in which

children read books, offering children shared reading experiences and their own interpretations of texts.

Gatekeepers may include authors, editors, publishers, librarians and many other adults who work with children and books. For example, Hintz (2020) lists "teachers, librarians, caregivers, reviewers, or literary critics" (p. 86) as arbiters of CL. The main focus of the study is on institutional gatekeepers in educational settings: teachers and librarians. Prior research shows that, usually, they are the crucial link in the chain of "child protectors" (Jenkins, 2011, pp. 444-446), who can be trusted to evaluate book appropriateness for a young audience. Involvement of teachers and librarians in the exploration of violence in picturebooks is justified by the substantial power of guardianship which they have upon young readers. Townsend (1995 [1971]) explains that the "suitability, popularity, and relevance" (p. 64) of the book for the child-reader should not be based purely on theoretical assumptions. Thus, questions like, "Will this be suitable for my child, will this be popular with my class, will this be relevant to the children in the area served by my library?" should be answered by parent, teacher or librarian, not by literary critic only (Townsend, 1995 [1971], p. 64). Hence, the study of the perspective of gatekeepers is an important part of the exploration of the social functioning of CL.

1.8.3. Picturebooks

A picturebook may be defined as a multimodal published book characterised by a complex relationship between verbal and visual narratives, in which words and images elaborate, enhance, amplify, complement or, sometimes, even contradict each other (Bader, 1976; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006; Sipes, 2011). Consequently, studies of picturebooks are situated within at least two disciplines: CL and sequential visual art.

The word *picturebook* may be spelled in various ways (e.g., picture book, picture-book) depending on the purpose of the speaker. According to Moebius (2011), those who prefer to emphasise the connections of this type of literature with the history of books use the classical spelling *picture book* which mirrors French *album de jeunesse*. However, the majority of CL researchers who perceive a picturebook as a book in which "pictures and words together are treated as semi-autonomous and mutually attractive chains of meaning" (Moebius, 2011, p. 169) prefer the term *picturebook*, which relates to the German word

Bilderbuch. Sipe (2011) adds that a picturebook is characterised by the unity of words and images, and this should be reflected in the spelling of the term (p. 238). Consequently, I follow the tradition established by scholars who study complex relations between words and images and use the term *picturebook*.

The first examples of narratives that aim at telling a story using words and images in a way similar to picturebooks can be traced as far back as the prehistoric period (e.g., cave paintings). Later on, stories depicted by a series of images appeared on Egyptian, Greek and Roman murals and in Chinese and Japanese scroll paintings. In the 18th century, William Hogarth's famous *A Rake's Progress* (1732-1734) communicated the fallen life of a young man via a series of black and white engravings with titles. Finally, in the 19th century, Randolph Caldecott started creating the first British toy books, which combined short text passages and colourful illustrations. These examples can be perceived as prototypes of a picturebook (Sipe, 2011, p. 238), demonstrating a long tradition of narratives in which images communicate the story alongside words.

When distinguishing picturebooks from other illustrated books (e.g., graphic novels, comics, art-books etc.) the differences might seem rather subtle. The most distinctive feature of the picturebook is that only in a picturebook do words and images play an equal role in creating meaning. In both comics and graphic novels, words play a secondary, complementary role and pictures dominate. Gibson (2010) mentions a few other differences between comics and picturebooks: temporal organisation, perceived purpose and expected reading mode (pp. 101-104). Temporal difference between the two types of books is that, in comics, the events from the past, present and future are often mixed into a complex mosaic, while, in the majority of picturebooks, time is linear: all the events happen chronologically. In addition, while comics are perceived as an entertaining read for children, picturebooks are seen first as an educational tool for developing literacy, and then as entertainment. Also, contrary to comics, which tend to be read privately, picturebooks are expected to be read with adults. This means that, unlike comics and other multimodal narratives, picturebooks are more likely to be perceived as educational reading for younger children that can be used to teach, instruct and build stronger connections between parents and children.

Picturebooks were selected for the study exploring fictional violence for two reasons. First, "picture-book discourse is either socialising in purpose, or is oriented towards

particular social constructions of representation and reality" (Stephens, 1992, p.198) and, therefore, picturebooks can bring new insights into how a social construct like violence is represented. Second, picturebooks use both words and images to convey meaning and, therefore, they are multimodal narratives (Bader, 1976; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006; Sipes, 2011), with a range of the meanings representing violence. Even though there is an extensive body of research on controversial topics in picturebooks (Becket, 2012; Evans, 2015; Schwarcz & Schwarcz, 1991), it is important to examine specific themes within controversial topics because each theme can be perceived rather differently by the gatekeepers. For example, a picturebook representing a death of a child's pet and a picturebook representing war deal with controversial topics; however, they are judged differently. This study has a narrow focus on picturebooks representing violence.

Picturebooks are "predominantly associated with childhood, with views about what is 'appropriate' in these texts being refracted through views about what is suitable for children" (Gibson, 2010, p. 104). Defining the age of picturebook readers may seem an easy endeavour; however, it is problematic because of such categories as crossover picturebooks aimed at a dual audience of children and adults (Beckett, 2012). Picturebooks are read by children and adults of all ages.

1.8.4. Censorship, Self-censorship, and Selection in Children's Literature

Censorship, or limiting public access to inappropriate material, is often seen as totalitarian and unnecessary by people with liberal views. The same people, however, might object to the free circulation of certain books if the readers of those books are children (Rudd, 2010). Censorship may take different forms. The most extreme form is *libricide*: burning books to prevent people from reading about certain ideas (Duthie, 2010). Heins (2007) concludes that pieces of art and literature as well as entertainment accessible to the general public may be recognised as "indecent", "inappropriate", "vulgar" or "offensive" and, consequently, censored on the legal level (p. 255). The eagerness to protect children from illicit knowledge is far from new: the topics which are considered to be inappropriate "change across time and cultural context, from Plato onwards" (Rudd, 2010, p. 154). Ulanowicz (2013) explains that the belief that children should be protected from scary and potentially dangerous fairy tales originates from *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*

(1693) by John Locke who advised children to read books like Aesop fables with morals, rather than listen to folk and fairy tales which could corrupt "tender minds" (p. 1). Despite centuries of banned children's books, the issue is still relevant.

Arguments against censorship are that if children read only sanitised texts, they are denied the opportunity to prepare themselves for the diversity of the outside world (Knox, 2019), and that banning the books may boost their sales and have an opposite effect (Cullingford, 1998; Nel, 2018; Lukens, 2007). In addition, while some children might not be ready to read a certain book, others might benefit from exploring the challenging issues depicted in the book. Heins (2007) points out that restricting a child's access to books is not a solution; she suggests that the more helpful alternative to censorship is education: teaching children media literacy, critical thinking skills, sexual education and others.

Selection is a term closely related to censorship. Nodelman and Reimer (2003) explain that while censorship involves adults deliberately denying children's access to books with certain content, book selection means that adults apply certain criteria to choose books for children. In practice, however, parents, teachers and librarians might select books using more censorious strategies. Some people might be against the idea of censorship; however, they eagerly apply *censorious selection* themselves. For example, a teacher might be against banning a picturebook that represents death if this book is already in the library; however, the same teacher might decide not to buy this book for the library collection precisely because death is one of its central themes. Such a decision is sometimes referred to as self-censorship.

Self-censorship is a type of censorship that happens locally and silently. For this reason, it is sometimes referred to as *silent censorship* (Williams & Dillon, 1993). It can be defined as "choosing not to select materials because of personal bias or fear of reprisal from one's community" (Knox, 2017, p. 269). Usually, self-censorship stems from a fear of upsetting parents and colleagues (Freedman & Johnson, 2001; Jacobson, 2016; Rickman, 2010), and manifests in relocating or removing books from shelves, labelling books as dangerous, altering book content by removing pages, or not purchasing books for a local library collection (French, 2003, Knox, 2017). Librarians who engage in acts of self-censorship pursue conflicting goals. On one hand, librarians intend to offer their readers free access to different types of information. On the other hand, librarians wish to avoid receiving any complaints from parents because in some cases such confrontation might

even cost them their job (French, 2003). Parents are the most common challengers of CL (Jacobson, 2016). Lukens (2007) observes that "worried parents often approach school administrators, teachers, or librarians about 'inappropriate' books" (p. xx). The reasons for worrying vary. Parents might think that the book has to be banned because it evokes "strong feelings" (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p. 105), lacks happy ending and moral values which parents want to endorse (Kauer, 2008), contains sexual content (Jacobson, 2016), portrays LGBT (Möller, 2014), or depicts challenging topics which adults are not comfortable discussing with children (Freedman & Johnson, 2001; Knox, 2017). Clearly, the primary aim of parents is to protect children. The problem arises when parents are not satisfied with simply limiting the access of their own child to a book they perceive as offensive; instead, the parents demand that the book is banned and removed from the library collection. Indeed, self-censorship can be seen as "powerful and invisible force within authoritarian groups" (French, 2003, p. 26). Freedman and Johnson (2001), who included both teachers and students into their empirical research on challenging books, found that students are willing to read books with difficult themes, whereas teachers are highly likely to self-censor these books and refuse to use them in the classroom. Rickman (2010) discovered that certain types of librarians are more likely to self-censor books than others. The characteristics of potential self-censors include: "(1) being of the age 60–69, (2) holding no formal collegiate education degree (BSE or MS/MSE) with library media certification or licensure, (3) being at the secondary level school library, and (4) having 15 or fewer years of educational experience" (p. 15). Freedman and Johnson (2001) explain that a heathy alternative to self-censorship is book selection.

The selection process can happen without censoring literature. The main aim of book selection is to use inclusion criteria in order to choose a wide range of books that represent various ideas (McClure, 1995). For instance, Bucher and Hinton (2010) list several strategies for selecting quality literature for young adult readers. They say that teachers and librarians should judge the appropriateness of books by consulting book reviews, checking information about book awards and book lists, evaluating literary elements (e.g., plot, characters, settings, theme, point of view and style) and applying their knowledge of literary theory (e.g., gender and postcolonial issues). In addition, Bucher and Hinton (2010) claim that the gender of readers should be taken into account because boys and girls have different reading preferences. Boys are claimed to prefer "short texts" and "visual texts",

and they are more eager to judge a book by its cover in comparison to girls, who are said to enjoy reading fiction for pleasure more than boys (p. 44). Based on this belief, librarians are advised to recommend graphic novels, comics and picturebooks to boys, and fiction (rather non-fiction) to girls. This reasoning shows the difference between censorship and selection: censorship focuses on exclusion criteria, and selection takes into account inclusion criteria.

1.8.5. Violence

There is more than one way to define violence. Galtung (1969) explains that violence is an action that includes a subject and an object, even though the action and the object might be difficult to notice. Krug et al. (2002) define violence as "the intentional use of physical *force* [emphasis added] or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (p. 5). This definition stresses that violence can be self-directed, interpersonal or collective depending on the subject. A more nuanced understanding of violence is offered by Brittain (2017) who says that violence is a *coercion* aiming to "express or influence the emotions, ideas, intentions or interests of an actor (or actors) over another (or others)" (p. 20). Therefore, Brittain emphasises the similarities between violence and oppression. For Hamby (2017), the act can be called violent only if it contains four components: it is intentional, nonessential, unwanted and harmful. However, Zizek (2008) argues that even if the object of violence is unknown and even if the act is normalised (therefore, perceived as necessary or wanted), the maltreatment of an individual is still violence. For example, discrimination may be seen by some as necessary; however, the harm it causes to the subjects justifies regarding it as violent.

Violence can be direct or indirect. *Direct* or *personal* violence may be classified as physical, verbal or psychological (Holmes & Gan, 2012; Jackman, 2002; Kitchin Dahringer, 2017). Physical violence involves "the use of physical force to cause harm, death, or destruction, as in rape, murder, or warfare" (Holmes & Gan, 2012, p. xvii). Furthermore, violence "may be corporal, written or verbal. Injuries may be corporal, psychological, material or social" (Jackman, 2002, p. 405). Overall, these types of violence, whether physical or psychological, can be categorised as *direct* (Galtung, 1969) or *obvious* (Zizek,

2008) violence. Direct violence is present in several picturebooks, for example, war slaughter in *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015), bullying in *Willy, the Wimp* (2014) and self-harm in *The Boy who Ate Himself* (2012). On the opposite side of the continuum, there is *indirect* or *structural* violence.

Structural violence is a term introduced by Galtung (1969) to claim that socio-economic conditions influence human's well-being, safety and longevity and therefore they should be treated as the subjects of violence. Structural violence can be seen as *social injustice* (Galtung, 1969, p. 171) and it is related to the uneven distribution of resources within a society. Leech (2017) explains, "Structural violence manifests itself in many ways, but its common theme is the deprivation of people's basic needs as a result of the existing social structures" (p. 184), meaning that oppression, poverty and limited access to resources such as food, education, medical care, recreation and alike may lead to unnecessary injury or death. Examples of representations of structural violence in picturebooks include *Waltzing Matilda* (2007), in which an Australian swagman (i.e., a transient labourer who travels with his belongings in a swag) steals and commits suicide as an attempt to fight social injustice, and a folktale "Vixen, the Sister" (2015) where Vixen is forced to steal and kill roosters because of poverty.

The other useful suggestion offered by Galtung (1969) is to explore two levels of violence: *manifest* and *latent*. Manifest violence involves visible actions where a subject is maltreated, injured or killed. Whereas, latent violence is hidden and invisible violence, which can be defined as potential and expected violence in a certain context. Galtung defines personal latent violence as "a situation where a little change would trigger considerable killing or atrocity" (p. 172). This definition can be applied to some contemporary picturebooks representing war. For example, in the picturebook *My Dog* (2001), the act of killing people (war slaughter) is represented in words and pictures, therefore it is a case of manifest violence. The words say, "They just looked like ordinary men, but they had guns and were crazy in the eyes. … they shot people in the street" (Heffernan, 2001, no page), and the image shows soldiers with guns shooting at someone. However, the act of war rape in the same book is implied and latent. The words tell the reader:

> …they drove away with my mum. I ran after them. I fell. I ran and ran, down the stony road after them. *Stop! Give me my mum!* But they didn't stop.
>
> She's so beautiful, my mum. My dad says that she's the most beautiful woman in the world. Why did they hit her? Why did they take her away?
>
> (Heffernan, 2001, no page)

Violence is a multifaceted term, and its definition depends on its application. In this thesis the term violence refers to unwanted and intentional words and actions aimed to harm or kill a subject. Regarding the subject, it can be self-directed, interpersonal or collective. From the point of view of an object, it can be personal (or direct) if an object is identifiable, or structural (indirect) if an object of violence is deeply rooted in a social structure and is therefore hardly noticeable. In addition, violence can be manifest if the action is visible, or latent if the act of violence is implied.

Table 1

A Typology of Violence in Picturebooks (Galtung, 1969; Krug et al., 2002)

	collective violence	*interpersonal violence*	*self-directed violence*
personal & manifest	war slaughter	bullying	self-harm
personal & latent	exile	war rape	suicide
structural & latent	discrimination	social isolation	self-neglect

Table 1 shows the types of violence commonly found in picturebooks. The typology of violence is adapted from the *World report of violence and health* (Krug et al., 2002) and complemented with the types of violence explored by Galtung (1969). This table is a result of my own exploration of contemporary Australian and Ukrainian picturebooks. The representations of violence vary. Sometimes they are subtle and implicit, other times they are clearly evident; nonetheless, they all have been an inevitable part of CL.

1.9. Thesis Outline

The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter introduces the reader to the research questions, explains the reasons for undertaking the research, outlines the scope of the study, sets the cultural contexts in which the research was conducted, and defines relevant key terms: children's literature (CL), gatekeepers of CL, picturebook, censorship, selection and violence. The second chapter reviews the academic literature on the genre, on gatekeeping and on selection in CL, as well as the current research on controversial themes, taboo topics and violence in CL.

The third chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study. It describes the research paradigm, philosophical assumptions, methodologies and research methods chosen for this study. In addition, it draws on quality assurance strategies and ethical considerations underpinning the study. At the end of the third chapter, the personal bias of the researcher and research limitations are mentioned.

The fourth and fifth chapters present and discuss the study's findings. The fourth chapter is divided into several sections focusing on gatekeepers of CL and their definitions of violence, the three dimensions of the decision-making process employed to select picturebooks representing violence and strategies for curating those books at school, in the library and at home. The fifth chapter discusses the findings of the study. The approaches to selecting picturebooks representing violence, the three dimensions and the consequences for education are compared and contrasted with the existing academic literature.

The final chapter of this thesis articulates the study's conclusions, summarises the major findings of the study and describes the implications and limitations of the study. Furthermore, it suggests pathways for further research. The sixth chapter is followed by the appendices and references. The appendices include profiles of research participants, interview questions, lists of the picturebooks and samples of book illustrations discussed during the interviews, and other relevant documents.

1.10. Chapter Conclusion

The main aims of the study are to understand how gatekeepers of CL in Australia and Ukraine perceive fictional violence, supervise young readers and curate picturebooks representing violence. The key terms discussed in this study are CL and picturebooks,

gatekeepers of CL, censorship and selection, as well as violence. CL is a broad term which usually implies books aimed at children; however, there has been a debate of what this term includes and excludes. Picturebooks are multimodal narratives where words and images complement and possibly elaborate each other's meanings. Gatekeepers of CL are adults who either allow and encourage, or warn, discourage and forbid children to read certain books. In educational settings, gatekeepers of CL are teachers, librarians and parents. Selection and censorship can be seen as two extreme points of the same process which I refer to as book curation. While censorship is a process of excluding books from book collections in order to protect children from harmful and offensive content, selection is a process of including suitable, appropriate, useful and enjoyable books in book collections aimed at children. Violence is defined here as an intentional and unwanted force aimed to harm, injure or kill. To summarise, this chapter has set the scene for the study, describing the study's aims, introducing major components and outlining relevant differences between the Australian and Ukrainian contexts.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter aims at situating current study within other research conducted in the area. It consists of two parts: initial and secondary review. This approach is suitable for a study informed by a grounded theory methodology because it establishes the research context, yet still leaves the room for new theories to emerge (Dunne, 2011; Dunne & Üstűndağ, 2020). The initial review began before the data collection; it aimed at mapping a theoretical landscape of research on violence, controversial themes in picturebooks and violence in picturebooks. The secondary review began after I conducted the first interviews, and it became clear that it was necessary to better understand gatekeepers' expectations toward genres of CL. Finally, after conducting all the interviews, I reviewed reader-response theories. The aim was to explore the categories of child reader offered by the CL scholars and to see how the new knowledge generated in this study can complement or challenge established theories.

2.1. Initial Literature Review: Mapping Theoretical Landscape

This section aims at reviewing the research conducted in the fields of CL, education and violence studies to understand the place of this study within these fields, to validate and refine the main research question and to reveal how the current study can narrow the gap in the research on gatekeeping in CL and violence in picturebooks. I used several strategies for writing this literature review. First, I familiarised myself with seminal research on CL, picturebooks, violence studies and violence in picturebooks conducted from 1970s to 2020s. Mainly, I focused on research conducted in English-speaking countries such as the UK, the USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Second, I engaged with the current research on picturebooks, and controversial topics in CL through participating in the IRSCL conferences in 2017 and 2019. Participation in these conferences allowed me to learn about the most current research in the field of CL. Third, I searched for the relevant publications in the archives of such well-known and trustworthy CL academic journals as *The Lion and The Unicorn*, *Bookbird*, *International Research in Children's Literature*, *Children's Literature in Education*, *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, and *School Libraries Worldwide*. Finally, I searched for peer-reviewed academic articles in such online databases

as ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), ProQuest Ebook Central and Project Muse. In my search I used key words “children’s literature violence”, “picturebook violence”, “gatekeeping children’s literature”, “censorship children’s literature”, “selection children’s literature”, “violence definition” and “violence interpretation”. Although, I tried to conduct a broad and extensive search, this literature review has its limitations. The literature reviewed here is not an exhaustive list of works on violence in picturebooks or gatekeeping in CL. Instead, it is a map that sets the scene for the current research and guided it.

2.1.1. Picturebook Research

Picturebook research is a rapidly developing field within CL studies. It has several directions. To begin with, picturebooks research can be concerned with studying actual picturebooks; such studies explore and offer methods for studying picturebooks (Colomer et al., 2010; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006; Sipe, 1998), and they focus on visual and textual representations in picturebooks (Allan, 2012; Doonan, 1993; Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2014; Lewis 2001; Nodelman, 1989; Painter et al., 2013; Salisbury & Styles, 2012; Schwarcz & Schwarcz, 1991). In addition, picturebook research can explore readers’ responses to picturebooks (Arizpe & Styles, 2016; Evans, 2009; Evans, 2015; Pantaleo, 2008). Furthermore, the research can focus on how picturebooks are used in education (Benedict & Carlisle, 1992; Jalongo, 2004; Haynes & Murris, 2011). Among these there are theoretical studies on picturebooks and empirical studies on how child readers respond to picturebooks and some research on how teachers use picturebooks in education.

Methodologies used in picturebook research are numerous. They include semiotics (e.g., Nikolajeva, 2010; Sipe, 1998), social functional linguistics (e.g., Moya Guijarro et al., 2009; Wu, 2014), narratology (e.g., Cadden, 2012; Nières-Chevrel, 2010; Yannicopoulou, 2010), cognitive studies (e.g., Moruzi, 2018; Mjør, 2010; Nikolajeva, 2013), queer theory (e.g., Świetlicki, 2020; Young, 2019), postcolonial theory (e.g., Grit, 2018; Nodelman, 2008) and other methodological approaches. Interviewing children after they have been reading picturebooks (e.g., Arizpe & Styles, 2016), focus groups with child readers (e.g., Ghosh, 2015), and children’s written responses to picturebooks and observation (e.g., Pantaleo, 2008) are methods used to investigate readers’ responses. Therefore, picturebook research

appears to be a well-developed field of CL which allows for certain flexibility of methodological approach.

2.1.2. Controversial Themes in Children's and Young Adult's Literature

The research shows that controversial themes in picturebooks intended for child readers are rare. It has been asserted that CL by definition excludes such controversial topics as sex, violence and death (Lurie, 1990; Nodelman, 2015; Zipes, 2001). Moreover, adults often expect violence to be absent from CL (Nodelman, 2015). Nonetheless, violence and death occasionally find their way into the books for children, including picturebooks.

By contrast, young adult literature embraces controversial themes. Readers of YA literature are usually understood as teenagers between 12 and 18 years of age (Knickerbocker & Rycik, 2019). Fiction written for teenagers focuses on identity construction, and on the conflict between the newly formed identity and the authority figures (Bucher & Hinton, 2010; Falconer, 2010). As a result, books intended for young adults often feature challenging themes, including violence (Falconer, 2010; Scutter, 1999; Stephens, 2010a). Furthermore, it has been argued that "themes linked with sexuality, violence and death became germane to adolescent fiction" (Stephens, 2010a, p. 141) and that "in contemporary YA [fiction], violence, death and the apocalypse have become the norm rather than the exception" (Falconer, 2010, p. 89). Overall, YA literature is often perceived as a transitional literature helping readers to move from CL with its didactic messages and happy endings to the YA literature exploring more complex and challenging issues and offering moral dilemmas rather than comforting solutions (Coats, 2010). This is also true for the picturebooks targeting teenagers that often represent more complex moral issues involving exploration of controversial themes, and featuring violence.

The thematic range of studies investigating disturbing topics is quite broad. The studies on controversial topics in children's and young adults' literature include research on death, sex and violence in fairy tales (e.g., Lurie, 1990; Tatar, 1987; Zipes, 1991), war in CL (e.g., Fox, 1999; Myers, 2000) and self-harm in literature for children and young adults (e.g., Crowdy, 2012; Reynolds, 2007). In addition, some studies are concerned with the issue of censorship in CL (Heins, 2007; Nel, 2018), and self-censorship in libraries (e.g., French, 2003; Knox, 2017; Moeller & Becnel, 2020). Therefore, the exploration of violence in CL is situated

within a broader context that includes several areas of research interests such as explorations of censorship, and challenging topics in CL.

Research on controversial topics in picturebooks encounters several challenges. Evans (2015) pinpoints three main problems connected with picturebooks that feature challenging topics. Firstly, the definition of this type of picturebooks is quite vague. They are referred to as *"strange, unusual … disturbing … shocking, troubling, curious, demanding and philosophical* [emphasis in original]" (Evans, 2015, p. 5). Secondly, there is no clear classification of controversial picturebooks. As a result, picturebooks which narrate stories about war, genocide, sexual abuse, incest, violence, death, childbirth and sex are often included in the same category. Thirdly, the age of the implied reader of challenging and controversial picturebooks is not clear. Indeed, picturebooks featuring uncomfortable themes often have little in common, but because there are not many of them, it seems convenient to treat them as one category. To identify whom the book is aimed at, suitable for and read by is another challenge. For example, O'Sullivan (2005) raises the question of the intended audience of picturebooks *Rose Blanche* (1983) depicting Holocaust. There has been some research to address the issue of the audience age of any picturebooks (e.g., Tucker, 1990) and on the audience age for crossover picturebooks (e.g., Beckett, 2012). However, little is known about how gatekeepers consider age, and the individual psychological characteristics of readers when they select picturebooks representing violence. This research aims to clarify this issue.

2.1.3. Violence in Picturebooks

Violence has been a broadly researched topic that brings together various disciplines. This includes research on defining violence (Jackman, 2002; Hamby, 2017; Tolan, 2007), theorising violence (Brittain, 2017; Galtung, 1990; Zizek, 2008), history of violence (Dwyer et al., 2016; Dwyer & Ryan, 2012; Pinker, 2011), strategies for preventing violence (Fraser & Seymour, 2017; Henry, 2000; Stanko, 2003; Triplett et al., 2016), and media violence (Edwards & Fuller, 2019; Freedman, 2002; Morrison & Millwood, 2007; Sekarasih et al., 2015). Within the field of CL, extensive research has been done on violence in folk and fairytales (Beckett, 2008; Bettelheim, 1976; Tatar, 1987; Zipes, 1991). Therefore, there is a strong foundation for studying violence in picturebooks.

Research on violence in picturebooks is a comparatively new branch of picturebook research which has gained popularity only recently. To the best of my knowledge, it began in the 1990s with the exploration of war in picturebooks (Schwarcz & Schwarcz, 1991), the IASL conference presentation "Violence in children's literature today" (Nimon, 1993) and a publication of a special issue "Violence and children's literature" edited by Reimer (1997) in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*. The main conclusion drawn by the researchers is that fictional violence often passes unnoticed (Nimon, 1993; Dresang, 1997; McGills, 1997; Reimer, 1997). Mauro (1997) states that rather than looking at the individual-collective nature of violence only, it is also valuable to distinguish different levels of violence visibility. The reason is that violence in children's books may be represented as "silent, pleasant, invisible, and deadly" (p. 117). The same is true for the perception of violence. If a certain type of violence is culturally acceptable than it may be "undetected" (p. 113). Furthermore, it has been claimed that the difference between the representations of violence in books for children and adults is that books intended for child readers offer more implicit and vague depictions of anything that might be potentially disturbing (Reynolds, 2011a). Thus, it is important to investigate the visibility of violence in picturebooks and to pay attention to the influence of culture on the perceptions of violence.

The most recent research on violence in CL shows some curious tendencies. Clearly, it is not concerned with the visibility of violence anymore; instead, scholars are trying to understand how violence is represented, and what roles violence plays in fictional narratives. For example, Jorgensen (2018) explains that violence in fairy tales enhances the masculinity of a protagonist even in the cases when violence if not performed by a male hero, but directed at him. She explains that "a discursive field of forced objectification through violence and transformations seems to constitute masculinity" (p. 355). Thus, instead of using descriptions of manly appearance, the fairy tale authors embody the protagonists' masculinity through their violent actions or their response to violence. Not only can fictional violence assist in constructing a character, it can be used for building a plot. The exploration of media violence highlights that representations of violence might be helpful in moving the plot forward, and that this narrative strategy is used across different multimodal narratives, including picturebooks. It is concluded that:

"Without conflict, a storyteller cannot build the necessary tension to create plot … if

> conflicts are not externalized into action, the story becomes static and talky, rather than dramatic, visual, and emotionally compelling … Conflict may not always lead to violence. However, conflict is the root from which violence can grow" (Edwards & Fuller, 2019, p. 1)

Fictional violence can also be used to bring readers' attention to a certain theme. The portrayal of violence might be incorporated into the story "to call attention to a problem, [or] arouse sympathy for victims" (Edwards & Fuller, 2019, p. 5), or to support certain historical myths about past wars (Kerby et al., 2017). McNamee and Mercurio (2006) explain that there is little research on violence in picturebooks despite the fact that picturebooks representing violence could be used in education to discuss war, terrorism, and other types of violence which children might encounter watching TV news. In their own research, the scholars state that there is a need for a study that would explore the decision-making process of caregivers who choose picturebooks representing violence for children. However, their study analyses representations of violence in five picturebooks. Therefore, to the best of my knowledge, despite scholarly interest in the representations of violence in CL, there is no empirical research that examines the opinions of gatekeepers concerned with the risks and benefits associated with reading picturebooks representing violence.

The contemporary research on violence in picturebooks and in CL has been conducted in several socio-cultural contexts. To name a few, there are studies exploring violence in American (e.g., Crawford & Roberts, 2018; Strekalova-Hughes, 2019), Scandinavian (e.g., Bjorvand, 2010; Neraas, 2020; Ommundsen, 2014), Australian (e.g., Kerby et al., 2017; Sharp & Parkes, 2017) and Ukrainian CL and picturebooks (e.g., Kachak, 2016; Świetlicki, 2018). Different types of violence have been studied and various methodological approaches have been selected. The prevailing type of violence examined in picturebooks is war. However, there are exceptions, for instance, Bjorvand (2010) analyses a Norwegian picturebook *Angry Man* featuring domestic violence.

Most research on violence in Australian picturebooks has been concerned with the representation of war, namely ANZAC soldiers (e.g., Bongiorno, 2016; Kerby et al., 2017; Kerby et al., 2019; Sharp & Parkes, 2017). However, other research is also present. For example, Sipe (2011) examines the Australian picturebook *Woolvs in the Sitee* (Wild & Spudvilas, 2007), and asks, "Is this picturebook a metaphor of violence, poverty, and

other intractable social problems, especially in large cities, that drive people to trust no one and to lose any sense of community life?" (Sipe, 2011, p. 247). Thus, Sipe implies structural violence. In Ukraine, some research has been conducted on violence in CL. There is a study on violence in young adult Ukrainian literature analysing novels for teenagers (Kachak, 2014). Similar to the Australian context, research on Ukrainian picturebooks has been mostly focused on representations of war (e.g., Świetlicki, 2018; Świetlicki, 2019). Overall, only a few studies have been conducted in this area.

To conclude, some types of violence in picturebooks seem to be explored more than others. The commonly explored categories of picturebooks representing violence include studies about picturebooks representing war and refugees. Whereas, violence against animals, discrimination, bullying and self-directed violence in picturebooks are less researched, and worthy of some critical attention. Furthermore, I conclude that perceptions of these themes by gatekeepers have not been studied sufficiently.

2.1.4. Gatekeepers of children's literature and violence in picturebooks

While CL research is usually preoccupied with a text, a reader and an author, there is a merit in studying another important element of CL: gatekeepers of CL. Tucker (1990) explains that children's literature differs from adult's literature mainly because young readers and adult readers have different needs and tastes. Nevertheless, adults are usually responsible for creating, publishing, and selecting texts for children (Nodelman, 2008). Furthermore, when it comes to picturebooks depicting controversial topics, gatekeepers play a major role: they have the power to recommend, to silence, to hide or even to forbid books. Lurie (1990) claims that the books recommended by adults to children are often narratives that teach "manners or morals or both" (ix) even if they are disguised as entertaining stories. She explains that the *subversive* and controversial texts depicting the world with all its imperfections and dilemmas are less likely to be recommended to children. Additionally, Nodelman and Reimer (2003) suggest that for many adults, "a good book tends merely to be one that does *not* [emphasis in original] contain oversubtle ideas, potentially bad messages, descriptions of unacceptable behaviour, or scenes fearful enough to cause nightmares" (p. 101). What constitutes potentially bad messages for gatekeepers have been changing over time. Prickett (2004) explains that fairy tales were mostly seen as

inappropriate reading for children in the 18th century. However, the situation changed with the translation of Grimm's fairy tales into English in 1823 and Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tales in 1846 (p. 175). This study explores how the gatekeepers perceive violence in different CL genres, including fairy tales, how they decide on the appropriateness on the books, and on what grounds?

The other important issue linked to the gatekeeping of CL is the fine line between censorship and selection. Both aim at catering for children's needs. However, the methods of achieving the aim differ significantly: censors try to protect child readers from *dangerous* books, whereas selectors focus on offering children the range of books that satisfy readers' needs and interests. Therefore, censors use criteria of exclusion, and selectors use criteria of inclusion. Dresang (1997) points out that the greatest opposition to discussing controversial picturebooks with children is usually created by "child protectors" who believe children can be easily "damaged" by controversial subject matter (p. 134). Moreover, Dresang questions the *harmfulness* of violence in CL, introducing the psychology-based notion of *resilience* to emphasise that controversial topics in books may be useful. The concept of resilience draws upon the idea that negative experiences contribute to psychological strength. Similar to Dresang, McGillis (1997) says that "rather than try to shield children from the world they live in, we ought to be trying to give them the tools to read this world carefully and critically" (p. 130). Furthermore, Salisbury and Styles (2012) explain this perspective saying that "many commentators – particularly in the West – have increasingly come to believe that young children must be protected from all things unpleasant and dangerous, in both life and literature… in our contemporary risk averse culture" (p. 113). The conflict between child-protectors and those who believe children should become more resilient deserves further exploration; therefore, this study will investigate this aspect of the issue.

Yet, another interesting area to explore is why censorship and self-censorship exist within CL, and why some adults want to prevent child readers from reading certain books. The research on this features different opinions. Nodelman (2008) half-jokingly implies that "adults writers lie to child readers – for their own good... that works as a means of protecting adults [gatekeepers] from children's knowledge of the actual truth, for the adults' own good" (p. 217). Moreover, Evans (2015) elaborates on this idea, say that "many adults feel challenging and controversial picturebooks are not suitable for children to read; however, it is they, as adults, who have problems coping with these challenging texts and

not the children" (Evans, 2015, p. 5). Booth (2011) explains that the grounds on which children's literature have been censored in the past include inappropriate language, immoral and antisocial behaviour of the main characters, homosexuality and presence of sex, death and violence. In addition, Heins (2007) explains that:

> When people are asked what harm they think flows from violent, sexual or other controversial art or entertainment [aimed at young audience], their answers range from the broadly moral (kids should not be "robbed of their innocence") to the developmental and psychological (fear, nightmares, anxiety, oversexualised behaviour), to the more specifically imitative (they will mimic violence or sexual activity that they see on TV). (p. 10)

The research, therefore, offers several theories for why gatekeepers are against controversial picturebooks in general. However, no previous studies have focused on how gatekeepers from different cultures perceive violence in picturebooks, and, if they are against showing picturebooks with violence to children, why they make this decision.

Lastly, many CL scholars agree that censorship does not work (Cullingford, 1998; Heins, 2007; Nel, 2018). Cullingford (1998) explains, "Banning certain books and thrusting others upon them does not help. It merely reinforces the distinction between pleasure and learning" (p. 193). Also, Heins (2007) says that imposing laws aimed at *protecting* children from *harmful* media is just a *quick fix* to the problem, whereas a real solution lies in education. She argues that "a healthy upbringing, education, and community values are likelier than taboos to immunise them [children] against violent, degrading or simple-minded ideas" (p. 12). Furthermore, Nodelman and Reimer (2003) argue censorship "deprives adults of the opportunity to discuss these matters with children, and to share their own attitudes with them" (p. 103). In the limited research on the gatekeeping of controversial picturebooks, censorship is presented as having more drawbacks than positives. As such, this study investigates whether gatekeepers of CL perceive censorship in the same way as these scholars, if and how they deem picturebooks representing violence to be appropriate to share or recommend to child readers, at what ages, and if, how and why they actually use controversial picturebooks in educational settings.

2.1.5. Implications for this Study

This literature review demonstrates that the majority of studies on violence have been mostly concerned with theorising violence, searching for effective methods to prevent violence, exploring media violence and violence in fairy tales as well as violence in picturebooks. In addition, there has been some research on selection and censorship in CL. Furthermore, the literature review shows that most of the picturebook research has been concerned with either the picturebook itself or the child readers' response to picturebooks. There has been some research on the use of picturebooks in education. The focus of the reviewed studies has been mainly on: 1) how words and pictures work together to convey meaning, 2) how controversial themes in picturebooks are represented, 3) how children interpret words and pictures in picturebooks, and how they respond to them, and 4) how teachers can use picturebooks representing controversial topics to foster empathy.

Both Australian and Ukrainian picturebooks representing violence have appeared in theoretical research exploring how war, violence toward refugees, and discrimination are represented in the picturebooks. Some research has been done on the public response to Ukrainian picturebooks representing disturbing topics. Therefore, this study is positioned within an already well-developed and well-established field.

Lastly, the research on gatekeepers of CL is still rare, and it has many unanswered questions. This study can contribute a new insight into how adults perceive fictional violence in picturebooks and on what grounds they make decisions about appropriateness of the picturebooks for child readers. Furthermore, the underexplored area of research which can be addressed by this study is concerned with why and how gatekeepers choose to select, read and discuss picturebooks representing violence with children.

2.2. Secondary Literature Review: Genres

During the data collection process, it became clear that gatekeepers often use genre as one of the main criteria for selecting and recommending books to readers, and that they have certain expectations toward each genre. Therefore, it is necessary to explore how genre is defined and understood in CL research. Examining literature in accordance with genre

indicators requires a structural formalistic perspective on a literary work (Lukens, 2007) where the following of certain rules supports the fulfillment of readers' expectations. Presence or absence of violence may be one such expectation.

2.2.1. Defining Genre

To define genre in CL is not an easy task. One of the ways to define genre is to describe it as a group of texts sharing the same characteristics (Lukens, 2007). This is sometimes referred to as *family resemblances* (Wittgenstein, 1953) or typical features which resemble each other without being identical and belonging to the same context. Usually, the distinguishing characteristics for each genre are: plot, characters, settings and epilogue.

Another definition states that genre is "a set of conventional and highly organised constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning" (Frow, 2006; p. 10). In comparison to the previous definition which is concerned with the book characteristics, this one focuses on the reader. It claims that because each genre follows particular rules, it evokes certain expectations in reader's mind. Further, Frow (2006) explains that the existence of genre differences in literature enables readers to understand and interpret texts, as they know what to attend to. Reynolds (2011a) argues, however, that children need to reach a certain age to start recognising genre conventions and to have certain expectations toward genres.

Finally, one of the possible definitions brings author, text and reader together. Jameson (1981) explains that genres "are essentially literary *institutions* [emphasis in original], or social contracts between writer and a specific public whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artefact" (p. 106). This definition highlights that each genre creates certain expectations. This is important for the current study because the research participants are looking at picturebooks belonging to different genres and who will, presumably, expect those books to follow certain conventions and to have certain functions.

2.2.2. Genre Taxonomy in Children's Literature

To categorise fictional texts into separate genres and sub-genres is a complex matter in both adults' and CL because the features associated with a particular genre are not always clear, and the boundaries between genres may appear to be arbitrary (Abrams, 1999; Lukens, 2007). To select criteria which would allow a text to be identified as a representative of a certain genre is more complicated than it seems. Hernadi (1972) describes more than 60 ways in which genres can be classified, dividing all the genre classifications into four categories which follow four critical approaches offered by Abrams (1999), i.e., expressive (artist oriented), pragmatic (reader oriented), structural (text oriented) and mimetic (world oriented). For the current study, which focuses mostly on the gatekeeper's interpretation of violence, pragmatic and structural approaches seem to be more suitable than expressive and mimetic ones. In addition, it might be difficult to distinguish one genre from the other, because genres often *overlap* (Lukens, 2007), and *cross the boundaries* of one another producing an innovation in the particular art field (Gardner, 1991). To support the claim of blurred boundaries between genres, Rudd (2010) argues that contemporary CL has "the postmodern tendency to mix or hybridize genres in varying degree of parody or pastiche" (p. 184). Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge a hybridity of picturebook genres.

CL scholars categorise genres within CL somewhat differently. Some regard realistic works and works of fantasy as belonging to separate genres (e.g., Lukens, 2010). Others define genres in accordance with the themes, labelling folktale, legend, fairy tale, animal story, family fiction and others as genres of CL (e.g., Hunt, 2005). Yet others differentiate types of books including poetry, novel, picturebook (e.g., Nodelman, 1988), or types of picturebooks, for example, wordless picturebook, crossover picturebooks, postmodern picturebooks, multilingual picturebooks, pop-up picturebooks and digital picturebooks (e.g., Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2018). Nonetheless, it is becoming a new norm to distinguish different genres of picturebook based on a type of story (Reynolds, 2011a).

For the purpose of this research, the studied picturebooks are divided into the genre categories according to the structural and pragmatic approaches. The structural approach takes into consideration the formal features of the text (plot, character, setting and theme); the pragmatic approach focuses on the readers' expectations of certain genre. The genres of picturebooks explored in this thesis are fantasy (including folktakes, fairy tales and animal stories), realistic fiction, historical fiction, and poetry because picturebooks representing violence tend to belong to these genres and not others based on my observation.

2.2.3. Realistic Fiction

Realistic CL attempts to mimic reality. It often conveys both dominant and subversive ideological messages in the least noticeable way, and it encourages the reader to believe that the entire story is true (Pearson & Reynolds, 2010; Stephens, 1992). Pearson and Reynolds (2010) explain that realistic "writing for children is concerned with teaching them about the world in which they live and shaping their attitudes" (p. 64). Lukens says realistic stories have one distinguishing feature: they seem "possible, although not necessarily probable" (p.15). The other characteristic feature is that instead of focusing on some big world problems, they usually explore a very specific situation, conflict or problem situated in a clearly defined context. Realism in CL attempts to represent reality accurately and it often explores disturbing themes; however, unlike realistic literature for adults, it usually leaves some room for hope (Mercier, 2011). Therefore, realistic picturebooks are expected to teach children about the world around them.

2.2.4. Historical Fiction

Historical fiction attempts to recreate the illusion of the historical past by featuring historical figures as characters, establishing a plot around famous historical events, and representing items of clothes, food and other objects that people had in the past. All this creates the sense of authenticity and truthfulness. As a result, the events of the distant or recent past can be interpreted in a new way.

Historical fiction can be dated to 1814 when Sir Walter Scott's novel *Waverly* (1814) was published (Cart, 2011). Since the 1930s historical fiction in CL has grown in popularity, and the focus of the narratives shifted "from the observation of great political events to a concentration on the life of the ordinary family, on how they lived and how the great events touched their lives" (Fisher, 2005, p. 327). In the 1970s, historical fiction aimed at English speaking 6 to 8 years old children was at its peak, and since 1980s, it has been slightly in decline. Today, historical fiction is mostly associated with novels, however, there are a few picturebooks that represent the historical past.

The distinctive feature of historical fiction is its settings (Fisher, 2005; Lukens, 2007). Representations of the past may create the nostalgic atmosphere, or construct a sense of authenticity allowing the reader to have a stronger belief that the story is inspired by real events, places or people. Consequently, illustrations would be "more important than in most other genres" (Fisher, 2005, p. 366). This is certainly true when we talk about picturebooks where the illustrator has the complicated mission of creating images of past realities in sufficiently plausible detail to convey the flavour of the time. The picturebook writer who creates historical fiction is expected to provide the reader with enough specific details without too many elaborations.

War narratives may be seen as a sub-category of historical fiction. War in CL can be both the main theme and the setting for the story. Fisher (2005) describes war narratives as "moving accounts of the horror and muddle of war" (p. 368) and as depictions of "an uncomfortable and unforgettable experience" (p. 371). Stories about war are shaped not only by historical events but also by their later interpretations within a particular culture (MacCallum-Stewart, 2007), impacted by both private and public memories about the war (Thomson, 1994). Contemporary Australian literature includes several examples of picturebooks exploring the First World War and other wars. The majority of these stories belong to the type of fiction in which the war is used as a setting where the main character is an ordinary person who happened to be in the wrong place in the wrong time.

There is a debate about the possibility to represent reality in historical fiction objectively. Lukens claims that historical fiction written for children can transform facts into fiction and to represent historical events "with increased objectivity" (Lukens, 2007, p. 17). Stephens (1992) disagrees saying that "there can be no narrative that is free from point of view and teleological purpose … there are no 'facts' without interpretations, and interpretations are morally grounded" (p. 205). Consequently, any writing (for children or not) should be seen as highly subjective and as such that reflects the moral, ideological and cultural values of the author. Furthermore, Stephens concludes that historical fiction is "the discoursal product of firm ideological intentions … [able] … to transform events which appear to be historical particularities into universals of human experience" (Stephens, 1992, p. 238). Therefore, it is arguable as to whether it is possible to represent any event objectively. However, it is evident that historical fiction always conveys ideological messages

and moral views, even if it appears to be objective, authentic, trustworthy, and claiming to describe facts or universal truths.

Because historical fiction is ideologically loaded, the narrator plays an important role in it. Morrow (2009) states that "it is vital that children are told a range of narratives about the past, with the characters and, importantly, the narrators, representing not just one gender or one race or one class" (p. 19). Lukens (2007) recognises the transforming power of historical narratives and the mythmaking work they perform. Each national culture has its historical myths, its heroes and villains. Barthes (1973) explains that "*myth hides nothing* [emphasis in original]: its function is to distort, not to make disappear" (p. 120). Historical fiction written for children allows certain cultural values and myths to circulate within society and be passed on from one generation to another. As a result, the historical past is remembered and interpreted accordingly. War narratives, for instance, may communicate ideological messages related to patriotism, national identity, feeling of belonging, sacrifice and other themes (Sharp & Parkes, 2017; Whitmarsh, 2001). Other types of historical narratives can share the perspectives of individuals who were silenced and voiceless in the past. For example, overviewing the Australian picturebooks representing history, Morrow (2009) explains that the picturebook *My Place* (1987) by Nadia Wheatley and Donna Rawlins is one of the first Australian picturebooks that represents the perspective of an Aboriginal girl in the 19th century, and the points of view of non-white children living in Australia. Clearly, the narrators and characters establish the point of view, and convey certain ideological messages which might transform readers' understanding of a historical event.

Reader's expectations of this genre mostly relate to historical accuracy. Special attention is paid to setting, to character behaviour and to details, for example, where and how food is served and eaten. Stephens (1992) explains that historical fiction is expected to meet four criteria: 1) the events should look historically authentic, 2) the characters should appear *credible* and to be easy to identify with, 3) the settings should create the illusion of the past and provide readers with a *vicarious* experience, 4) the human relationships should be represented in the way easily comprehended by a contemporary reader. Overall, after reading a work of historical fiction, the readers are expected to feel as though they travelled in the time machines and learnt something about the past. However, along with learning about the past, readers of historical fiction absorb contemporary views and values

2.2.5. Fantasy

Fantasy can be defined as a type of literature which inevitably contains some elements of the "impossible" (Wolfe, 1982, p. 224). These can be impossible characters, events, objects or settings. Levy and Mendlesohn (2016) elaborate this idea, defining fantasy as "the realization of the *impossible* [emphasis in original] … [where] the existence of the fantastic is a constant negotiation between author, publisher and reader" (p. 3). Nikolajeva (2012) claims that the major difference between fantasy for adults and fantasy for children is that the latter often "provides moral and spiritual guidance for young people, addressing an audience that has yet not any firm distinction between reality and imagination" (p. 60). In addition, Filmer-Davies (2000) says that fantasy stories are valuable tools for fostering social and cultural values.

Nevertheless, fantasy is sometimes perceived as such that entertains rather than educates. Despite many benefits of reading fantasy, "adults still show some fear that fantasy literature will draw the young into unhealthy escapism and an inability to manage in the *real world*" (Baker, 2011, p. 84). Mistrust of fantasy is not a new phenomenon. "Why should the mind be filled with fantastic visions instead of useful knowledge?" asked Edgeworth in 1796 (qtd in Baker, 2011, p. 80). This view is still somewhat present among contemporary adults. Therefore, it should be expected that some research participants might have certain prejudice against fantasy.

Fantasy invites readers to embrace a high level of fictionality. Wolfe (1982) says that "fantasy is in many ways closer to daydreaming or reverie than to cognitive thought" (p. 227), implying that the way readers perceive fantasy differs from the way they perceive real world. Similarly, Todorov (1973) states that "the marvellous implies that we are plunged into a world whose laws are totally different from what they are in our own and in consequence that the supernatural events which occur are in no way disturbing" (p. 140). However, Yolen (2000) warns readers about the illusory innocence of fantastic CL; she explains that while reading fantasy, readers might believe they are transferred to another world and live another life. Yet, Yolen warns that along with marvellous imagery, child readers may absorb the writer's prejudices and intolerance.

Fantastic stories are sometimes used to communicate a disturbing message in a metaphorical way and to "express whatever is muted, suppressed, or compromised in

mainstream culture" (Lurie, 1990, xii). Indeed, "the morals - or ethical bones of each tale - are often well hidden beneath the ample flesh. But … the stories are not only not entirely free of ideological viewpoints" (Yolen, 2000, p. 327). This implies that although perceived as mere fruit of imaginations, fantasy narratives can convey disturbing messages and promote certain ideology.

2.2.6. Folktales and Fairy Tales

Folktales and fairy tales often appear on the pages of picturebooks depicting violence. Even though it is not always possible to set a clear boundary between these two varieties of traditional tales, scholars who take a sociohistorical perspective on literature (e.g., Zipes, 2002) argue that in many cases we can distinguish folktales from fairy tales as their goals and target audiences may differ significantly. Whereas folktales were, originally, aimed at the listeners of all ages across all social classes, and were only adapted for children after the 18th century, fairy tales from the very beginning were written for the upper- and middle-class children with the assumption that parents might read those texts as well. The folktales' goal was to inspire people for a social change, whereas the aim of fairy tales was to educate children explaining to them the existing social order. Therefore, the major difference between folk and fairy tales are predetermined by their original target audiences and the purpose.

Folktale is an umbrella term which includes anecdotes, fables, novellas, wonder stories, animal tales and other tales told and retold orally with the idea in mind to express human fears, desires, needs, and aspirations (Jones, 2002; Tatar, 2003). The identifiable features of a folktale include formulaic phrases, repetitive patterns of events, typical characters (e.g., the third son of the king) and the description of the main conflict at the very beginning of the story (Stephens, 2010a). Also, Tatar (2003) explains that unlike fairy tales, folk tales often have rather realistic settings. In the past, folktales used to be transmitted orally. Consequently, the plot, character development and other features of the story were altered in accordance with personal preferences of the narrators who often might have been illiterate. As a result, folktales often had multiple versions; they were rarely censored and could include all sorts of atrocities and ferocities. Nowadays, the same folktale may have many versions too.

Traditional fairy tales are fictional narratives aimed at children (and their parents) that include unrealistic settings or events, and which can provide readers with moral instruction and advice on how to fit into society. It is a common misconception that a fairy tale must have magical creatures among its characters. In fact, “fairy tale” has a Latin origin, where the fairy literally means “that which is spoken” (Rudd, 2010, p. 172). Therefore, there are plenty of examples of fairy tales in which neither a fairy nor an ogre ever appears. Unlike in folktales, the settings and the characters of fairy tales often are more specific and are described in detail. Jones (2002) explains that a fairy tale possesses certain typical features; these are: 1) presence of fantastic events, objects or characters; 2) conflict and its resolution are central to the theme; 3) the ease of identifying with a sympathetic protagonist who is undertaking a quest in search of personal happiness; 4) happy ending; 5) the good is rewarded whereas the evil is punished (Jones, 2002). Jones says that the first feature (presence of fantastic events) is salient, while all the other are additional. However, it seems that precisely the combination of all of these characteristics in one text would indicate it to be a fairy tale. Moreover, the features described by Jones are important for the current study because they imply that the readers of fairy tales, including gatekeepers, would have specific expectations toward the picturebooks featuring fairy tales. The common expectations are: at the end of the story, all problems are solved, protagonists are safe and happy, and antagonists are punished or defeated.

The purpose of fairy and folk tales often differs significantly. According to Zipes, folktales are “reflections of the social order in a given historical epoch, and, as such, they symbolize the aspirations, needs, dreams, and wishes of common people in a tribe, community, or society, either affirming the dominant social values and norms or revealing the necessity to change them” (Zipes, 2002, p. 7). Consequently, the invisible function folktales have performed was to challenge the dominant ideology and to provide hope of liberation and emancipation. Through unsophisticated plots and the predictable actions of the ordinary characters, folktales have been able to communicate the perspective of the folk, illiterate peasants and servants, as opposed to the worldview of educated aristocracy. Jones (2002) elaborates Zipe’s ideas about the folktales capturing the most intimate hopes of ordinary people, and adds to it that readers have been perceiving folktales as the "engaging fictions reflecting [their] ability to laugh at [themselves] as well as to express [their] deepest dreams and fears” (Jones, 2002, p. 9). Thus, it can be concluded that

folktales communicate the most intimate hopes and fears of ordinary people of a certain historical period who share the same cultural heritage.

Contrary to the folk tales, fairy tales were invented to educate. Zipes (2012) points out that "the purpose of the [fairy]tale from the very beginning was to instruct and amuse; that is to make moral lessons and social strictures palatable" (p. 9). Even nowadays, fairy tales are often used in education as the way to teach social rules and conventions in the West. In addition, after looking at specific features of fairy tales, Jones (2002) concludes that the fairy tale "functions to instruct the young about who they are, how they relate to others, and what they should know of the world" (p. 18). At the same time, we should be careful and not overestimate educational properties of fairy tales, which often try to convey to the reader 19th century ideological assumptions. As Zipes put it:

> The fairy tales we have come to revere as classical are not ageless, universal, and beautiful in and of themselves, and they are not the best therapy in the world for children. They are historical prescriptions, internalized, potent, explosive, and we acknowledge the power they hold over our lives by mystifying them. (Zipes, 2012, p. 11)

This means, that fairy tales are tightly connected to the historical and cultural context they emerged from. Similar to Zipes, Rudd (2010) explains that the fairy tale's "flexible form has made it the perfect vehicle for expressing a society's concerns and desires" (p. 172). Therefore, fairy tales do not necessarily teach a moral lesson, however, they always reflect the social preoccupations of their epoch. Jones (2002) adds to this discussion saying that "pan-humanistic tales" do not exist, because even though some tales "do seem to address certain fundamental concerns that are of interest to all people, the form they take is marked to some extent by their cultural ancestry" (p. 29). As a result, it can be concluded that fairy tales are deeply rooted into culture. This should be taken into account when studying the perceptions of violence in fairy tales.

2.2.7. Animal Stories

Stories portraying animals with human character's traits is another type of CL containing traces of violence. Animal stories originate from folklore and animal characters are often present in the fables, folk tales, fairy tales, myths and legends discussed previously. Barker (2005) identifies animal stories as a genre in its own right, whereas Lukens (2007) sees it as a subcategory which can belong to other genres. Interestingly, le Guin (2004) offers yet another taxonomy, saying that stories with animal protagonists may belong to such genres as myth, fable, folk tale, fairy tale or fantasy, but they can exist as a set of separate genres such as: animal biography, animal novel and others. Furthermore, there is a continuum of animal presence in those stories: animals can be the only characters, they can mostly dominate the narrative, or take a modest spot side by side with human characters.

After 1484, when Aesop's fables were translated into English, animal characters have invaded stories written for children; their main themes were moral dilemmas, and controversial topics, like death or violence (Barker, 2005; Reynolds, 2011a). The common argument relating to why animal characters dominate stories for children is based on the idea that children are more likely to identify with animals because they have something in common (Reynolds, 2011a). Both children and animals are often attributed a "privileged and protected position" (Barker, 2005, p. 279), therefore, "animals are used in an anthropomorphic way to mirror children's own behavior" (p. 290). This might have an implication on the stories depicting violence where the main characters are animals, as children might feel stronger compassion toward the harmed animals if they identify with them.

Animal stories are often accused of simplicity. Le Guin (2004) explains that although, in the past, animals themselves and stories depicting animals were an organic part of everyday life, after industrialization and computerization, she argues, animal stories of any length are seen to be inferior, "primitive" and sometimes even "trivial", therefore suitable for children who are "not yet fully humanized" (p. 22). Even though, animal stories have been an inseparable element of oral folklore for centuries, we now tend to underappreciate the value of myths and folktales with animal characters in them. Her main argument is that "our innate, acute interest in animals as fellow being, friend or enemy or food or playmate, can't be instantly eradicated" (le Guin, 2004, p. 30). Thus, contemporary storytellers are constantly trying to "fill the void" by creating verbal and visual narratives in which animals take an important place. However, there is more. Barker (2005) says that if the main

characters are portrayed as animals, children can much easier digest tough moral messages because the story will not seem “threatening or disturbing”, yet it will “teach them a lesson in human (rather than animal) nature” (p. 281). For example, animal stories might be used to teach children empathy toward others. These claims are highly relevant to the topic explored in this thesis, because they suggest that children are less anxious and more empathetic if characters are animals. This leads to the conclusion that the gatekeepers might prefer picturebooks featuring animals to those portraying human characters as animal picturebooks evoke less anxiety and more empathy in child readers.

Furthermore, animal stories with controversial topics may serve as a playground for pushing the boundaries in a safe way, helping children to learn the difference between socially accepted and socially disapproved behaviors. Children are likely to experience the pleasure of transgression imagining themselves as misbehaving animal characters (Zeece, 1998). By seeing how animal characters are doing mischief and are getting punished, children may satisfy their desire for adventure and the unknown without feeling guilty about it. As Angotti (2010) pointed out, children “want excitement, rebellion, *subversion* [emphasis in original]” and that is why they “turn to book characters who actually do what they themselves have only dreamt about” (p. 96). Therefore, children may be more eager to identify with antagonists in an animal story as they know that this is just a game, a masquerade, a carnival.

The most common controversial topics explored in the realistic animal stories are cruel treatment of animals, and distinct wild species. In fantastic animal stories, the most dominant themes would be linked to family, friends and other members of the social environment. At the same time, many other themes are explored in those picturebooks. When it comes to a more detailed exploration of challenging topics in fantastic animal stories, there is a gap in the research which this thesis will attempt to narrow.

2.2.8. Poetry

Poetry can be seen as a genre of literature different from prose and drama. Unlike drama, poetry is not expected to be performed on a stage - even though such possibility is not excluded. Compared to prose, poetry can be distinguished by its rhythm, meter, often more

precise and economic use of words and a tendency to use metaphors and allegories more often.

Whereas defining poetry as a genre is a relatively simple task, the difference between poetry and children's poetry is not always that clear. Styles (2005) notes that the majority of anthologies of children's poetry consist of poems "about children", "about childhood" and the ones which are "suitable for children" (p. 187) rather than verses intended for child readers. The tendency to write children's poetry belonging to those three categories has a long tradition. Before the 17th century children could enjoy listening to lullabies which could be both for children and about children. However, in the 18th century, the first poetry written especially for children appeared. These were John Bunyan's *Country Rhymes for Children*[3] (1686) and Isaac Watt's *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (1715). Both authors were "determined to discipline and educate the reader, using poetry as the vehicle" (Grenby, 2008, p. 33). Poems that explored the themes of death and salvation from the child's point of view were richly illustrated with numerous pictures depicting everyday life scenes. Moreover, the common belief was that any knowledge can be learnt easier if put into verse. As a result, by the beginning of the 19th century, virtually all the textbooks (e.g., history, religion, geography, music) were written in verse (Grenby, 2008). The belief that poems should educate is not as strong nowadays, however many readers might still expect children's poetry to teach children a lesson they will remember.

Since the Victorian Age, the tone and the thematic range of children's poetry has changed significantly. Contemporary poetry does not idealise the piety and innocence of childhood as the Victorian poetry did. It recognises that modern children who are hardy and resilient and, consequently, desire to read literature which would embrace the dark side of childhood as well as the light (Opie, 1992). Styles (2005) notes that "contemporary poetry emphasises the need to love, value, amuse and protect small people and has a liberal tolerance of their private brand of humour" (p. 189). Indeed, the poetic picturebooks for children are often filled with humour, cleverness and respect for children. However, some poetic picturebooks have a more serious tone and are adaptations of poems aimed primarily at adults, e.g., *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015).

[3] also known as *Divine Emblems or A Book for Boys and Girls*

2.2.9. Categories of Readers

In addition to considering the genres, the data collection has guided me to investigate the categories of child readers constructed to describe the ideal reader for each picturebook. Rosenblatt (1978) explains that at different points of history, a text, an author and a reader were given a different amount of significance in literature criticism. During the periods of classicism and neoclassicism, literary critics were mostly preoccupied with the text itself ignoring the people who wrote or read it. However, with the development of semiotic structuralism the focus shifted toward the reader. The quest for categorising the ways in which readers respond to books became popular in 1970s when the heuristic concepts of "informed reader" (Fish, 1970), "implied reader" (Booth, 1961; Iser, 1974) and "ideal reader" (Iser, 1978) were developed. The ideal reader is a construct of a reader who can decode and understand all the possible interpretations implied by the text. Iser (1978) explains that the real reader can hardly ever become an ideal reader because "how can one person at one go encompass all the possible meanings?" (p. 29). Real readers interpret text depending on their historical time, cultural background and stage of their life. Also, the same book read by the same reader at different times can be interpreted differently. The texts, however, always contain the potential of many meanings, and "texts come into existence only in the minds of readers" (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p. 17).

The concept of the ideal reader has been criticised. For example, Rosenblatt (1978) said that "the preoccupation with some illusory unspecifiable absolute or 'correct' reading or ideal reader" (p. 140) should be rejected. In spite of this, there have been several attempts to categorise readers, namely child readers. Appleyard (1990) uses Erikson's psychosocial theory (1982) as a basis for introducing five types of readers or reader's responses: player, hero and heroine, thinker, interpreter and pragmatic reader. Preschool readers are perceived as players: they are learning to read, to understand the genre conventions, to shape their expectations toward books and to manage their emotions. Primary and upper-primary school children are seen by Appleyard as heroes and heroines because they are likely to identify with child characters, whereas secondary school students are seen as thinkers because they already understand the ideology of the texts. English college students are claimed to be interprets, and adults are pragmatic readers. However,

the main problem with this categorisation is that all children at primary and upper-primary are believed to respond to texts as hero and heroine readers despite differences in age, personality, and personal experience.

Another attempt to use the idea of implied reader in CL criticism is linked to the exploration of ideology, subjectivity, and reader-text interaction. Stephens (1992) criticises Iser's notions of implied and ideal reader; instead, he borrows the concepts of narration, focalisation and subject position from Bal's (1985) narratology theory and suggests using the notion of subject position offered by a text to a reader to better understand how readers interpret the text. Furthermore, it is suggested that reader response theories tend to be either overly "text-focused" or "reader-focused", and it would be useful to find a middle ground (Stephens, 1992). This study attempts to establish the middle ground by exploring how gatekeepers perceive the text, and the *ideal* readers.

Contemporary studies of readers' response are rarely concerned with categories of readers. Most focus on how real children respond to particular texts. Examples of such studies are numerous (e.g., Arizpe & Styles, 2016; Evans, 2015; McLaughlin & Devoogd, 2020; Pantaleo, 2008). Indeed, these studies show a more complex and accurate picture of the world than their predecessors that tried to construct ideal readers; however, they do not reveal the gatekeepers' expectations of child readers. Because CL usually has a dual implied readership - implied child reader and the implied adult reader – "texts invite adult access to a repertoire of knowledge and strategies the official child reader doesn't possess and isn't supposed to notice" (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p. 21). Thus, the texts create certain expectations of whom they are for. Therefore, despite being rather outdated, the concept of an ideal reader can still be useful for the purpose of examining gatekeeping and selection in CL.

2.3. Chapter Summary

This literature review includes two major sections which began at different stages of research. The initial review started before my data collection. It has been an ongoing endeavour throughout the research process. It has situated the current study within the CL research and violence studies and helped to clarify the aims and research questions of the current study. The secondary literature review started after data collection. It has informed

and guided the research. The main concepts examined in the secondary literature review are genre, realism, fantasy, folk and fairy tales, animal stories, historical fiction, poetry, and ideal reader.

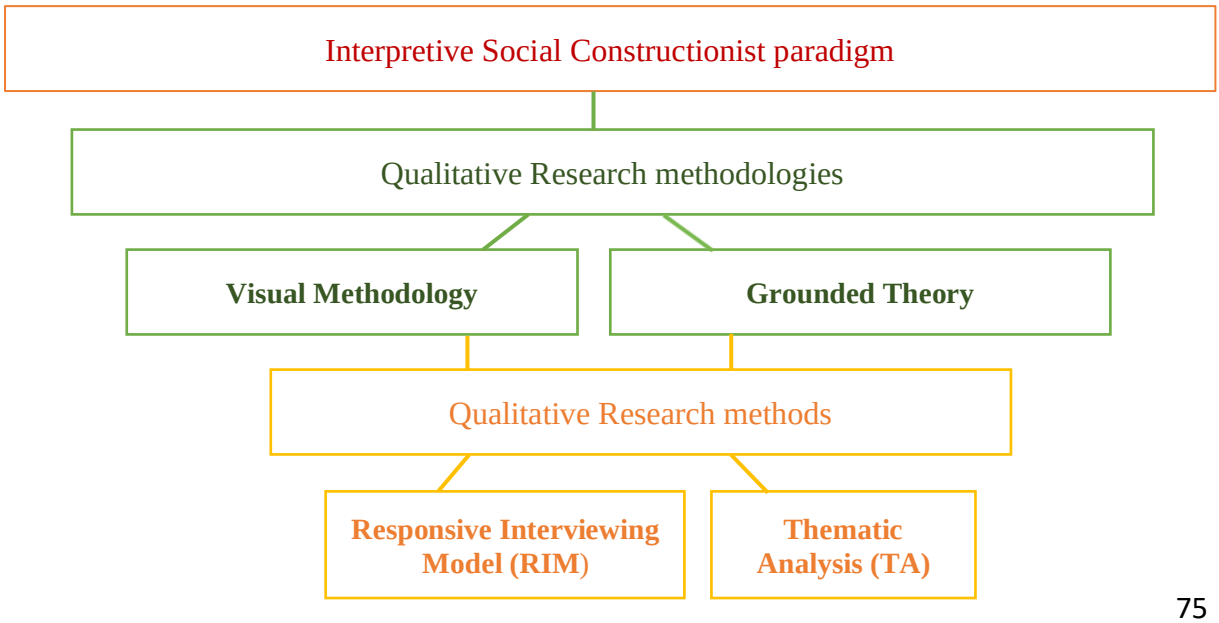
Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

This chapter explores the research paradigm and philosophical assumptions used in this thesis, and justifies the associated methodological choices. Also, it briefly describes the research methods, strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in this study, and the axiological and ethical considerations. To begin, I explain why the constructionist interpretive framework is suitable for this research. Next, I explore the ontology and epistemology associated with this paradigm.

After establishing the philosophical stance, I discuss methodologies. This study is informed by grounded theory methodology and visual methodology. The methodologies are followed by the description of two research methods of qualitative research employed in this study: Responsive Interviewing Model, abbreviated name RIM (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) and Thematic Analysis, abbreviated to TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry et al., 2019). I also explain how the participants and picturebooks were selected, how the data were collected, analysed and interpreted. Further, I explore the quality assurance techniques demonstrating research trustworthiness and showing that the research processes were dependable, confirmable, authentic and ethical; and that the findings of the study are credible, transferable and valid.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework for the Current Study



Not only the ontology, epistemology and methodology are discussed in this chapter, the axiological assumptions are also reviewed. Hence, it is shown that my scholarly biases have been shaped by my cultural, educational, linguistic and backgrounds. Because the study is underpinned by the constructionist paradigm, the axiological assumptions are of high importance for understanding the contributions and limitations of this research. Finally, the ethical considerations associated with this research are addressed.

3.1. Research Paradigm

The research paradigm serves as a "net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22), and, at the same time, it plays the role of the *interpretive lens* (Creswell & Poth, 2018) that guides the research process. In addition, the paradigm influences the choice of the research design, the methodology and the methods.

The paradigm chosen for the study is social constructionism. Social constructionism can be defined as a theoretical approach that acknowledges the subjective nature of knowledge, accepts that understanding of the world depends on historical and cultural contexts, and recognises that knowledge is constructed in the process of social interactions and not through observation (Burr, 2015, pp. 2-5). This choice is justified for several reasons. First, the topic, the aims, and the research questions of the study point to the interpretive, subjective and multifaceted nature of the study. In addition, the significance of the context and my philosophical preferences indicate that constructionism is a suitable match for the study. The central concepts discussed in this study are CL, childhood, gatekeeping, fictionality and fictional violence. These social constructs cannot be measured in weight, size or intensity, and therefore a positivist approach is not suitable. Even defining violence in picturebooks is problematic and highly subjective (Morrison & Millwood, 2007; Triplett et al., 2016). Based on previous research on violence, the assumption is that the researcher and the research participants are likely to define and discuss violence in books differently because they possess various identity markers (e.g., cultural background, age, gender etc.). Consequently, it is assumed that "multiple, apparently conflicting versions of the same event or object can be true at the same time" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.19).

The aims of this research are also supported by the interpretive philosophical tradition. The main goals of this study are to understand how fictional violence is perceived by the gatekeepers of CL, what image of child-readers is constructed by the gatekeepers, and how they select and curate picturebooks representing violence. However, it is not assumed that one correct solution exists. Rather, my goal is to represent complexity and generate new knowledge on this rarely explored topic. Furthermore, because this research is concerned with exploring the participants' attitudes toward violence in picturebooks and attributing meaning to what the research participants say, the social constructivist paradigm can assist with avoiding oversimplifications.

My research questions are concerned with the exploration and interpretation of meanings. Answering these research questions requires a dialogic approach in which the researcher and research participants can explore the issue and construct the knowledge together. The participants' opinions and the researcher's views are seen as subjective, authentic and equally important. Even if these views are contradictory, they enrich the study with a multitude of voices and demonstrate a variety of interpretations.

Context is essential in this study. When the participants are active co-creators of meaning, their cultural backgrounds impact the themes emerging in the research. In addition, the locations where the research took place and the situations in which the data were collected are important. Indeed, a deep understanding of worldviews and perceptions of research participants comes from acknowledgment of cultural, geo-political and socio-economical contexts (Crotty, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

3.2. Philosophical Assumptions: Ontology and Epistemology

The choice of a research paradigm results in a range of implications as it impacts the research ontology and epistemology. The constructionist paradigm is associated with a relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24). This study, therefore, is underpinned by relativistic and subjectivist worldview.

Relativist ontology fosters the belief that multiple realities can co-exist and that each reality depends on the socio-cultural context. Whether reality exists is not a concern; however, a preoccupation of social constructionists is the ways in which reality is defined,

understood, interpreted and negotiated (Burr, 2015). From the constructionists' point of view, the aim is to understand how concepts representing reality are constructed though language and other means of communication.

The subjectivist epistemology supports the idea that new meanings are co-created by the researcher and the research participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Constructionists are interested in the shared meanings of people who belong to the same group, for example, profession or national culture (Burr, 2015). Consequently, social constructionism is a framework which allows the synthesis of shared meanings into a multilayered narrative that demonstrates the complexity of the world.

3.3. Qualitative Research

The type of research, methodologies and methods of a study should be guided by the research questions. The overarching research question is: how do gatekeepers of children's literature in educational settings, who belong to different national cultures, perceive fictional violence, curate picturebooks representing violence and guide young readers? This includes:

1) Who are the gatekeepers of children's literature in educational settings in Australia and Ukraine?

2) What categories of ideal child readers are constructed by gatekeepers of children's literature in the context of reading picturebooks representing violence?

3) What are the defining features of a picturebook representing violence that influence gatekeepers' decisions about its age-appropriateness?

4) What are the differences and similarities between gatekeepers' perceptions of fictional violence in picturebooks in Australia and Ukraine? What is the role of culture when judging violence in picturebooks?

These questions can be explored within the constructionist paradigm because they are concerned with “Who?”, “What?” and “How?” questions, rather than trying to define the causational relations with the “Why?” question (Blaikie & Priest, 2017; Seale, 1999). The first and second questions strive to understand the experience of selecting books for children in different socio-cultural contexts, in Australia and Ukraine. While human experiences and perceptions are often subtle and difficult to grasp, the practices guiding picturebook selection could be easier to articulate. The third and fourth questions are about perceptions of artifacts and practices that guide the book selection. All four questions address the cultural differences in the interpretation of violence. These research questions guide my endeavour to analyse various modes of thinking which influence how the gatekeepers interpret and discuss fictional violence with children.

To answer the questions a cross-disciplinary solution is necessary as both educational research and children’s literature studies play a role in the exploration of this issue. The type of research that can be helpful in answering these complex questions is Qualitative Research (QR). It has been chosen for this study because it allows the exploration of complex problems through deep engagement with the data, detailed description of the processes and the inclusion of multiple participant’s voices.

The distinguishing characteristics of the QR include: the importance of the context, the influence of the researcher-participants interactions on the study, the role of the researcher’s critical stance and the flexibility of methodology which allows using a variety of approaches (Creswell, 2014). Context plays an essential role in the QR because cultures and circumstances in which the explored problem is situated influences the problem itself, any meanings and interpretations of the problem, and consequently, the research findings themselves (Maxwell, 2013). The other factor influencing the research is where, when and how the interactions between the researcher and the participants occur. The participants might choose to discuss the problem on the deeper or more shallow level, depending on the level of trust shaped by the situation and the willingness to discuss certain questions with the particular researcher. Thus, the personality and positionality of the researcher also plays its role. The worldview and the belief system of the researcher influences the ways in which the research questions are composed and the answers are sought. As stated before, the researcher’s biases determine the interpretive framework selected for the study, however, they also impact the methodology. The flexibility of the approach allows the researcher to

choose the methodological approach within the QR that matches the research questions, the context and their value system. In addition, the QR enables the researcher to explore sensitive issues in detail and to show complexity. To gain a more thorough understanding, the QR strives to present a holistic and complex picture by acknowledging the multiplicity of perspectives, demonstrating a range of meanings and interpretations (and perhaps organising them into a system), using inductive and deductive reasoning to show the depth and complexity. All the indicators described above suggest that the qualitative research approach is beneficial for this study.

3.4. Methodologies

The methodologies chosen for this thesis were guided by the research questions, the paradigm and the type of research undertaken. This study is qualitative in nature. It is aligned with the social constructionism. This section explains why grounded theory and visual methodologies were consulted to conduct the study.

3.4.1. Grounded Theory

This study is informed by the grounded theory approach. Grounded theory (GT) is a set of methodologies aimed at developing theoretical explanations of social processes where theory emerges from a systematic collecting and comparing data. It stands in contrast to research approaches based on to testing an existent theory (Glazer & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2002; Patton 2015). Seale (1999) explained that although the GT approach can be adapted to the needs of various paradigms because the main purpose of grounded theorising is to encourage "self-awareness and self-criticism, as well as an openness to new ideas that is often a hallmark of research studies of good quality" (p. 104). There are two major directions in the grounded theory approach: objectivist grounded theory (e.g., Glazer & Strauss, 1967) which positions the researchers outside of the research context and sees them as objective witnesses; and constructivist grounded theory (e.g., Charmaz, 2006) which is underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm, and views the researchers as influencing and being influenced by the research participants. This study follows the latter approach.

The constructionist approach in GT encourages the researcher to move beyond describing the phenomenon and to use the data for generating a theory that explains an action, a process or an interaction (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 82). This implies inductive reasoning: the hypothesis is not predetermined at the beginning of the study, rather it emerges from the narratives told by participants and from the personal interpretation of the researcher. Two distinguishing features of GT are: the participants are selected in accordance with theoretical sampling, and the data collection and analysis happen simultaneously (Charmaz, 2002). The limitations of GT are that despite the intention to represent complexity, the researcher risks oversimplifying social and psychological processes by merging different ideas into a single theme.

3.4.2. Visual Methodology

Visual methodology is a research approach where images are used as the object of study, or as a tool for generating data, or as a way for representing findings (Banks, 2001; Rose, 2016). Methods derived from this methodology can be seen as visual research methods. Visual methodology allows the researcher to perceive images as "meaningful", those that represent reality, and as "affective" those that influence the viewer's perception of reality (Rose, 2016). This idea resonates with Hall's (1997) division of the social approaches into semiotic and discursive. The semiotic approach explores how artists portray reality using various visual means, and the discursive approach studies the effects of those representations on a human, a community, or a society. This study follows the discursive approach exploring the impact of books illustrations on its viewers.

The choice of a visual methodology results from the questions asked. Because this study is about the interpretation of violence in picturebooks by the gatekeepers, the use of visual methodology is necessary. To understand how librarians and teachers interpret book illustrations representing violence, images were used as a tool for generating data. The illustrations were presented to the research participants to discuss fictional violence and to help the participants to recall other examples of picturebooks representing violence.

Overall, this study employs a discursive aspect of visual methodology. The images are used as props during the interviews: to provide the research participants with visual examples of violence in picturebooks. This methodology is used because book illustrations

are an important component of picturebooks and the visual representations impact readers' perceptions of a book along with verbal representations.

3.5. Research Methods

This section discusses research methods selected for sampling, collecting, analysing and interpreting the research data. The types of data in this study include picturebooks used as props during interviews, and gatekeepers' opinions about picturebooks. The picturebooks were selected in accordance with clearly defined criteria. The recruitment of research participants involved theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2002), an ongoing sampling where the choice of participants depends on the development of a theory.

The choice of research methods was guided by the central research aim: to explore how the gatekeepers of CL interpret violence in picturebooks in Australia and Ukraine. Charmaz (2002), notes that "methods *are* merely tools. However, some tools are more useful than others" (p. 15). Interviewing is said to be a tool that can help "to understand others' meaning making" (Warren, 2002, p. 97), and therefore it can assist in exploring the interpretations of violence in picturebooks. The in-depth-interviewing and subsequent search for the underlying themes in the interviewees' responses are used to map the theoretical landscape of CL gatekeeping and guardianship across two distinct cultures. To collect the responses of research participants, I used the Responsive Interviewing Model, RIM (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; 2005; 2012). This model has been also used for the first round of analysis. Further, I used Thematic Analysis, TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry et al. 2017) to analyse and interpret the data.

3.5.1. Sampling: Picturebook Selection

The inclusion criteria for the picturebooks that were used to generate discussion with the research participants were: 1) they represent violence (e.g., war, bullying, suicide) visually, verbally or both; 2) they have won prestigious book awards and, therefore, are more likely to be known and recognised by broader audiences; 3) they are discussed in book reviews

and on book blogs; 4) they are a part of school curriculum (in Ukraine) or they are available in public libraries (in Australia). It was important to include award-winning books, books mentioned in book reviews and reprinted editions because these are likely canonical picturebooks available in schools and libraries that are well known (Kidd & Thomas, 2017). In addition, some of the books discussed in the later interviews are picturebooks recommended by the research participants in earlier interviews.

At first, I approached several people in my professional networks who met the inclusion criteria. I invited them to participate in the research and they agreed. In addition, I asked them for recommendations, and then sent letters of invitation to the potential participants known by my colleagues. Some agreed to participate. Also, I sent email invitations through the professional networks' group emails; however, this strategy was not successful, as no one replied to those.

The final list of books selected for the research project consists of 18 picturebooks: 9 Ukrainian, 8 Australian, and 1 British picturebook which is very well known in Australia. These books include published editions from 1979 to 2017. Therefore, the research participants could remember reading and using some of these books in the past and may have had more recent experiences of using them. The stories belong to different genres, and they represent several types of violence, including manslaughter, war rape, suicide, abduction, street fights, and battles with dragons. The books represent violence in words and illustrations. Some books in the sample are winners of prestigious book awards. For example, *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015) was short-listed for the CBCA Picture Book of the Year award in 2016, which is a sign of high recognition in Australia. *The War that Changed Rondo* (2015) won the Bologna Ragazzi Award in the nomination "New Horizons" in 2015 and was included to the "White Ravens 2015" catalogues, which means the picturebook was highly praised by the experts of CL in Europe. The list of the picturebooks used in this study can be found in the Appendix.

The challenge in selecting picturebooks in Ukraine is that books with folk and fairy tales are often a borderline type between a picturebook and an illustrated book: they have many more pages than a traditional picturebook, and consist of many stories; at the same time, the illustrations in those books complement, enhance and elaborate on the text. Furthermore, those illustrated collections of stories play the same role (in education, and bedtime reading) as picturebooks do. Finally, they are well-known and widely read by

Ukrainian children. This is why I included four illustrated collections of Ukrainian folktales along with traditional picturebooks.

In Australia, the challenge for selecting picturebooks presented itself in choosing books which represent violence, and cultures familiar to the interviewed gatekeepers. In addition to selecting the Australian picturebooks that have been published recently, I also chose to discuss with participants a picturebook *Australian Gnomes* (1979) created by a world-known Australian author Robert Ingpen, and a well-known in Australia picturebook *Not Now, Bernard* (1980) by a British author David McKee. These two books contain explicit representations of violence, and some cultural symbols that might be familiar to the Australian participants. Some Australian tales are included into the study too. For example, *Blossom Possum: The sky is falling down-under* (2007) which is an Australian version of the British *Chicken Little*. Because there are no Aboriginal Australians among the research participants (to my best knowledge), I decided not to discuss picturebooks with Aboriginal stories in this study: I believe it would not be fair to discuss these stories without including the perspective of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. To avoid any "epistemic violence"[4] (Spivak, 1988), the representatives of postcolonial cultures should not be spoken *for*, or *about*, they should be offered an opportunity to speak *for* themselves and *about* themselves.

3.5.2. Participant Selection and Recruitment

The participants in this study are teachers and librarians from Australia and Ukraine, who can be referred to as gatekeepers of CL. The reason why this study focuses on adults and not on children is that CL is mostly written, edited, illustrated, published, reviewed and bought by adults therefore adults decide on the appropriateness and relevance of books for children (Evans, 2015; Nodelman, 2008). As a result, adults have the power to censor, select and recommend books, and to suggest the modes of reading to children. This study focuses on the gatekeepers in the educational settings.

[4] "Epistemic violence"[4] is a term coined by Spivak (1988) and used in postcolonial studies. It refers to the attempts of former colonisers to represent and discuss former colonial subjects without including the latter into the conversation. This reinforces the voiceless position of the postcolonial cultures in the mainstream discourse.

The teachers and librarians (who may also be parents or grandparents) were selected as participants because children rarely buy themselves books, and they would usually choose from a selection of books pre-selected and approved by teachers and librarians. Furthermore, when adults discuss picturebooks with children, they often offer their interpretations of the story. Therefore, it is important to ask adults how they select picturebooks and how they interpret the representations of violence in children's picturebooks.

The research participants are Australians and Ukrainians. Overall, the teachers' primary motive in both countries is to use picturebooks in education; the librarians' main motive is to promote reading and introduce readers to a wide variety of books. This may influence the ways in which research participants respond to the questions of this study. The comparison of gatekeeping practices across two distinct cultures enriches the results. However, it also brings the challenge of incompatibility. Although it is safe to presume that teachers in both countries use picturebooks for educational purposes – they use them to teach literacy and literature – the use of picturebooks is more popular in the Australian classroom than in the Ukrainian classroom. The Australian and Ukrainian librarians arguably use picturebooks to promote reading among young readers, and they want to offer a variety of reading materials to the young readers. However, there might be some cultural differences between the librarians in two countries. For example, because in many Ukrainian public and school libraries, the computers are either absent, or not available to the young readers, the readers are likely to ask for a book recommendation from a librarian. This way, similar to the Australian teachers, the Ukrainian librarians would recommend picturebooks to and discuss them with children. The Australian teachers-librarians working in school libraries often perceive themselves as educators too (Merga, 2019); however, the librarians in public libraries would work with books rather than with children. As a result, the roles of teachers and librarians in both countries may sometimes overlap.

Sampling for selecting the research participants was a combination of a convenience sampling, employed only at the beginning, and an inductive theoretical sampling. Inductive theoretical sampling, as the name suggests, is not concerned with validating any pre-existing theory. Instead, it aims to mindfully select participants in relation to the research questions, theoretical perspective, and analytical framework (Mason, 2002) and also to gain rich data for theoretical arguments (Charmaz, 2002). In addition, theoretical sampling aims

to discover ideas “that might challenge the limitations of the existing theory, forcing the researcher to change it in order to incorporate the new phenomena” (Seale,1999, p. 92). The themes that became prominent in the first interviews were further explored by comparing and contrasting various stories of the interviewees who were “selected according to the descriptive needs of the emerging concepts and theory” (Morse, 2010, p. 235). This process works in two ways: the researcher can focus on similarities that highlight patterns or differences that contrast the emerging ideas (Warren, 2002, p. 87). First, if certain ideas need to be further clarified, explained and elaborated, other people from the same context (institution, region) are interviewed. Second, if all the participants agree with each other, then the theory should be challenged and alternative cases should be sought (Mason, 2002, p. 124), and consequently, people belonging to various contexts are interviewed. This type of sampling requires the constant comparison of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Silverman, 2005) encouraged in both RIM and TA methods. The analysis of the first interviews happened simultaneously with the recruitment of the participants for the consecutive interviews. As a result, the theoretical sampling assisted in reshaping and refining the emerging categories and decreased the gaps between them (Charmaz, 2002, p. 689).

The research participants were selected in accordance with the following criteria: profession (librarian, teacher librarian or literature teacher), citizenship (Australian or Ukrainian), cultural background (Australian, Ukrainian, American, Armenian); the length of professional experience (5+, 10+, 15+, 20+, 25+, 30+ years of job experience), and gender (males and females). This range of characteristics is useful to explore how the community of gatekeepers perceive violence while conducting comparatively small number of interviews. Thirty participants took part in this study. According to Creswell (2012), the optimal number of participants in a qualitative research study varies between one and 40. It was said that having more than 40 respondents would not necessarily add the depth as the researcher’s ability to construct an in-depth view on the issue diminishes with each new case (Creswell, 2012, p. 209). Therefore, the aim for this study was to recruit between 10 and 20 participants in each country. The recruitment of participants stopped when the data reached “saturation” (Charmaz; 2006, p. 113), meaning that new thematic categories ceased to appear.

The application of the described recruitment procedures proceeded as follows. At first, I approached several people in my professional networks who met the inclusion criteria. I invited them to participate in the research and they agreed. In addition, I asked them for recommendations, and then sent letters of invitation to the potential participants known by my colleagues. Some agreed to participate. Also, I sent email invitations through the professional networks' group emails; however, this strategy was not successful, as no one replied to those.

After I conducted, transcribed and analysed the first five interviews, and identified the potential themes, the new participants were invited on the basis of their experience of working with picturebooks and children, belonging to a certain national culture and representing a certain generation. If I needed to clarify certain themes, I would sometimes interview two or three people from the same type of library, or several people with a similar length of professional experience. This gave me a deeper and more elaborate understanding of the phenomenon. To see if there are cross-generational or gender differences, I interviewed participants of different gender and those who have various lengths of professional experience. This provided the study with rich data. I stopped recruiting new participants when saturation occurred and no new themes appeared. Overall, I recruited and interviewed 11 Australian and 19 Ukrainian participants, all of whom worked as librarians or literature and language teachers. On average, the Ukrainian interviews were shorter (30-40 min) and in four cases I interviewed more than one person from the same institution. The Australian interviews were longer (60-70 min), and each person represented different institution. The difference in length can be explained this way: the Australian participants would often spend some time explaining the Australian context to me and providing me with examples; the Ukrainian participants assumed I knew the context (which was true), and some Ukrainian participants gave less examples in comparison to the AU participants. The reason why the number of participants differed in the two countries is that data saturation occurred earlier in Australia than in Ukraine.

3.5.3. Interviews

Because this study falls within the constructionist paradigm, and the participants are seen as equal co-creators of meaning, I chose the Responsive Interviewing Model (RIM) to collect

and partially to analyse the data. The RIM (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, 2005, 2012) offers clear strategies for conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews that are aligned with constructionist paradigm (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 30) and can be used for grounded theory and other methodologies. Rubin and Rubin (2005) define the RIM as "a dynamic and iterative process" (p. 15) in which each interview begins with the main topic in mind, however questions are adjusted, altered or added in accordance with the interviewee's knowledge, experience and personal preferences. As a result, the researcher can learn what the participants think about the issue, and what is most important to the research participants. Thus, each research participant may influence the research and the research questions, redirecting the main focus to particular aspects of the explored topic. The RIM perceives an interview as a guided conversation (Kvale, 1996) where ideas are co-constructed. It is suitable for this study where the gatekeepers and the researcher contribute to the co-creation of meaning on the studied topic.

RIM can be characterised by four distinctive features: (1) spontaneity, (2) depth and richness, (3) unpredictability, and (4) flexibility of the approach (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; 2005). First, the semi-structured interviews resemble ordinary conversations due to the spontaneous questions appearing during the interview; consequently, research participants are seen as *conversational partners* rather than subjects. This feature is very valuable for the study because the participants are experts in their field and they should be given an opportunity to redirect the conversation toward the ideas they find more important for understanding violence in picturebooks. It is said that researchers conducting in-depth interviews should "go with the flow, be playful, and be open to an experimental attitude" (Johnson, 2002, p. 111) instead of trying to hear particular findings from the research participants. During the interviewees, my additional questions often were spontaneous and based on the previous answers.

In addition, the RIM seeks "depth, detail and richness" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 12) rather than breadth. Johnson (2002) explains, that in-depth interviewing often creates a situation where the interviewer acts as a student "interested in learning the ropes or gaining member knowledge" (p. 106). Therefore, I often asked clarifying questions to hear more on the same topic. Furthermore, since the interviewing took place across two national cultures, the interviews were long, extensive and detailed with no preliminary assumptions or categories imposed. The research participants could lead the conversation to match their

belief systems and sometimes they digressed. If the digression was relevant to the topic, we would develop a new line of themes within the discussion about violence in picturebooks. If the participants were completely off topic, I would politely ask a structuring question to bring us back to the main conversation.

The RIM's orientation toward grounded theory means that data collection and analysis happened simultaneously. Along with spontaneity, depth, and unpredictability, responsive interviewing offers flexibility: the research questions and the interview questions may be adjusted. Rubin and Rubin (2005) explain that "the researcher initially establishes the general direction of the project, [but] the conversational partners set a more specific path" (p. 35). This feature was very valuable for the current study, informed by the grounded theory approach. After interviewing the first five participants, I reshaped the second research question to narrow the focus down and added the third research question to demonstrate the range of perspectives of research participants. In addition, I changed some interview questions. For example, in the first interviews, I was asking participants about their memories of the books they read as children and about their current reading preferences. However, the answers to those questions did not contribute any significant insights to the research questions asked. Furthermore, those questions might have taken one third of the interview, as the participants enjoyed talking about the books they read as children much more than about violence in picturebooks. Also, after I completed the Ukrainian interviews, I changed some of the Ukrainian picturebooks (used as interview props) because the research participants recommended including a number of books that in their view were more significant and representative of Ukrainian culture than the initial set of books.

The significance of context cannot be underestimated in the interviews of a cross-cultural nature. Ryen (2002) explains that "questions, cues, and prompts are not simply stimuli to empty the interviewee's reservoir of cultural data; rather, they actively contribute to the contexts in which experiences are narrated" (p. 347). All the locations for interviews were chosen by participants. The interviews were conducted in libraries (e.g., school library, public library) the participants worked for, at university premises and in cafes. The duration of the interviews ranged from 15 to 85 minutes. To interview all the participants took two years in total.

Prior to the commencement of each interview, I learned about each participant's educational and professional background to better understand their areas of expertise and interests. Rubin and Rubin suggest that "researchers match their questions to what each interviewee knows and is willing to share" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 4) to produce a unique and deep conversation. I followed this advice and tailored the questions for each interviewee individually based on the participant's educational background and occupation. Therefore, each interview included personalised questions at the beginning of each interaction. For example, I could ask, "Could you tell me more about the time when you worked for the X school library. How often did children ask for book recommendations?" or "I know that you organise book workshops in the library. Have you used picturebooks representing violence, such as war, during any of these workshops?"

The interview protocol consisted of three types of questions: (1) questions related to the participant's educational and professional background (e.g., experience of working with children and picturebooks); (2) queries asking to define violence and to give examples of controversial books read to/with children; (3) questions that discuss the examples of violence represented in 9 Australian and 9 Ukrainian picturebooks. Within those major blocks of questions, I used nine kinds of queries: introductory questions, follow-up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, direct questions, indirect questions, structuring questions, silence and interpreting questions (Kvale, 1996). Charmaz (2002) explains that when conducting interviews informed by grounded theory, researchers should "choose questions carefully" (p. 679). She advises to ask open-ended questions that do not imply any particular answer, do not force a participant to follow any specific line of thought and do not impose any preconceived categories or definitions of the discussed process. I followed this suggestion: my questions required extensive explanations, asked for defining terms and giving examples (See Appendix). This way, the research participants were co-creators of our guided conversation. During the interview, I provided each research participant with a printed list of sample questions and explained to them that this was just an indicative guide which we might follow if we chose to or change entirely, and that if they would like to share anything related to the interpretation of violence in picturebooks that was not in the questions, they were encouraged to do so. Also, I said that if the participants were not willing to answer a certain question (for whatever reason) they could omit the question.

The first set of questions was aimed at learning more about each participant's educational background, their experience working with children and picturebooks, and gaining an understanding of how the participants perceived themselves in a process of selecting books for children (e.g., guardians). Those questions, therefore, served as the basis for writing a profile of each research participant (see the Appendix) to illustrate that the findings were co-constructed by people of certain occupations, genders, educational and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, the findings of this study are not necessarily replicable in other contexts.

In addition to acknowledging the participants' educational and professional backgrounds, it was important to establish a mutual understanding of the research topic and to give participants an opportunity to share their own examples of violence representations before offering them my examples. Charmaz (2002) emphasises that it is important not to assume that the researcher and the research participants "share views and worlds" (p. 684), and that everyone may define the discussed terms in their own way. In addition, Rubin and Rubin (2005) emphasise that the "open-ended way in which interviewing is conducted encourages the conversational partners to suggest topics, concerns, and meanings that are important to them" (p. 33). This is why the second set of questions asked the research participants to define the term *violence*, to explain how they understand it, and to provide their own examples of books representing violence. In several cases, the research participants asked me to e-mail them the questions in advance, so they could familiarise themselves with the ideas to be explored, and I sent them the tentative questions prior to the interview. Those who read the questions before the interview were very clear about what they would like to focus on during our conversations and usually found it easier to define violence. They often brought books from their home library to show me and had no difficulties with providing me with examples. When people were not familiar with the interview questions, the research was enriched with spontaneity and unpredictability of their definitions of violence. However, in those cases the participants often could not think of any examples of violence in books they have read.

To inspire a discussion and to understand how different gatekeepers interpret the same illustrations, I provided the participants with several examples of picturebooks where illustrations were accompanied by text that depicted various types of violence. This also helped to avoid the situation in which the participants did not remember any instances of

violence in picturebooks which might have led to stifling the interview. The research participants were asked to look at 18 picturebooks. In most cases, the Ukrainian picturebooks were familiar to the Ukrainian participants, and the Australian picturebooks would be seen as foreign and unusual because the research participants had never seen them before. The Australian picturebooks were known to the Australian participants prior to the interview in the majority of cases; however, the Ukrainian picturebooks were new and foreign to them. The aim was to observe cross-cultural difference between the two groups of participants, and to see if the familiarity with the book would make a difference in the ways violence was perceived by the gatekeepers.

After looking at the visuals, I asked the participants to consider the text as well. The Australian participants could not read Ukrainian texts, and the majority of the Ukrainian participants did not speak English fluently. Therefore, I had to retell the Ukrainian stories to the Australian participants, and the Ukrainian stories to the Australian participants. Since these were picturebooks, often the entire story could be told in a couple of sentences. The example of *Blossom Possum* (2007) text and my retelling of this story can be seen in the Appendix. I also translated the excerpts of texts representing violence from English to Ukrainian and from Ukrainian to English so that these could be explored in more detail. I did not ask the participants to read the books in advance because I wanted to explore the decision-making process from the moment a librarian and a teacher heard about the book for the first time to the moment they decided to use it, or not. In order to create very similar storytelling experience in both languages, I decided to be consistent with how I retell the stories, therefore:

1. When the author of the text used the words that described acts of violence (e.g., “to box somebody’s ears”, “we were butchered as lambs at the slaughter”) I would make sure I included them in the oral story. In the later interviews, I sometimes asked participants what would happen if I changed, modified, or removed the words referring to violence;
2. If the participant asked for clarification, I would give some additional information about the context (e.g., about the author, about the culture and historical period in which the text was produced);

3. I always gave the participants plenty of time to study the illustration, to read the text on the discussed page if it was in their language, and for poetry, I would give an opportunity to read a translation.

All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. To audio record in-depth interviews is a common practice in qualitative research that allows collection of rich and detailed data (Creswell, 2014; Mack et al. 2005; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The drawback of using a recorder in the study on violence is that people may make different statements 'on and off record' if they are concerned that their answers might be misinterpreted or that they might present themselves in an unfavourable light (Warren, 2002). In several cases, the interviewees openly admitted that they would censor certain books (remove them from library shelves or limit children's access to them) when we had an off-record chat before the interview. However, the moment I turned on the recorder they assured me that they would never censor anything, and that censorship is inherently bad. After each interview, I wrote brief field notes describing the context of the interview, and made notes about the off-record conversations. Also, I marked each interview in the archival log to systematise the data and to keep track of all the interviews (Mack et al, 2005).

After recording every 1-3 interviews, I transcribed them manually, coded them in accordance with RIM, and analysed the emergent themes and concepts to see if I needed to add new questions or picturebooks, or to modify the existing questions for the next set of interviews. To ensure accuracy and minimise the number of errors and misinterpretations in the transcripts I used several strategies: I transcribed the recordings myself aiming for a high level of accuracy, and verified the written transcripts with participants.

The accuracy of the transcripts was among the top priorities in the process of data collection. Poland (2002) mentions the case where external "transcribers found the interview material they were working on so depressing and traumatic that they were altering the testimonies of respondents to make them sound upbeat" (p. 633). To avoid this, I decided to transcribe all the interviews on my own, aiming for highly accurate word-for-word transcriptions. According to Peräkylä (2004) "at the time of transcribing, the researcher cannot know which of the details will turn out to be important for the analysis" (p. 289). This point is valid for any transcription, consequently, I tried to be as truthful to capturing the meaning of each verbal utterance as possible. In my transcripts, I typed the

detailed verbatim report and noted all the long pauses, smiles, laughter, changes in intonation if it was made on purpose (e.g., to represent a child's voice), as long as it was relevant to the meaning of the expressed words. Also, I wrote down the titles of each discussed book in square brackets to be able to return to the data later and understand what the words were referring to. At the same time, para-linguistic and phonetic idiolects were not taken into account because unlike the Conversational Analysis school, the RIM is less focused on how the words are said and more preoccupied with what meanings are conveyed by words. Thus, I did not write down speech mannerisms if they were a characteristic feature of the speaker rather than a single occurrence (e.g., interjections like "um"), and I omitted word expressions such as "you know" or "that sort of thing" if they occurred very often (more than a dozen times) because those language features did not impact the meaning of what was said. When transcribing, I wrote down memos, adding information about the context of the interview and about how I interpreted certain passages. All the memos were in brackets and highlighted in red colour to distinguish them from transcribed passages. Also, while preparing the transcriptions, I highlighted "notable quotes" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) with the bold font. Later on, the notable quotes served as the basis for further coding and thematic analysis.

I transcribed all the recordings manually to better familiarise with data. Also, I translated the Ukrainian citations into English. To avoid the traps mentioned by Poland (2002), namely, to minimise the number of omissions and mistaken words, I used several strategies. To begin with, I listened to each recording at least three times: at first, to transcribe and then, to check if there were any mistakes or omissions. After the transcriptions were completed, I sent them to the research participants, so they could verify the text and correct any errors or misinterpretations. Poland (2002) explains that even though, the research participants who are asked to verify the transcripts might alternate the originals by deleting, editing and adding certain passages, "the clarification of intended meaning may be as important as (or more important than) the establishment of the accuracy of transcripts" (p. 644). This way the spectrum of potential misunderstanding in the transcripts was minimised, and the participants of research remained active co-creators of meanings and contributors to the initial analysis.

The initial analysis of the data was done in accordance with the RIM (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) and consisted of the following steps: (1) transcribing the recording; (2) summarising

each interview; (3) coding (defining, finding and marking relevant text passages); (4) sorting out the codes: combining all the similar codes into a single group (document), and comparing those groups; (5) comparing and contrasting the codes and integrating them into a single story; (6) generating a theory out of the emergent themes and concepts; (7) considering if the singular cases and example can be generalised. Rubin and Rubin (2012) explain that steps 6 and 7 are optional and dependant on the research aim. After completing each transcription, I coded the document, highlighting the passages that were relevant to the research questions and labelling them in a distinctive way. I coded the data manually: one interview after the other. Next, I created a list of codes for the interviews from the Western Ukraine, the Central Ukraine, and the Eastern Ukraine to notice if any big differences were present among these three regions. I also created a list of codes from the Australian and specific Tasmanian data, and compared the Ukrainian and the Australian data.

The further analysis that identified concepts and themes contributing to answering the research questions was based on the grounded theory approach and combined the responsive interviewing model, RIM (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; 2005; 2012) and thematic analysis, TA (Brown & Clarke, 2006; Terry et al., 2017).

3.5.4. Using Thematic Analysis to Interpret Data

The literature documents several analytical tools with the title “thematic analysis” over the last decades (Javadi & Zarea, 2016; Terry et al., 2017) Here, I am using the term Thematic Analysis (TA) to refer to the research method for analysing qualitative data developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). TA is a flexible research method that aligns with a variety of paradigms and methodologies, including the constructionist paradigm (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015) to which this study belongs. It can also be combined with grounded theory approach if the data are explored inductively (Floersch et al., 2010). TA can be seen as an analytic tool for identifying and interpreting meaningful patterns across a data set to answer a particular research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012) and to gain a deeper understanding of a discussed problem.

TA is used for systematic and thorough data analysis in studies that interrogate “collective or shared meanings and experiences” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57) rather than

individual or unique cases. This matches the research purpose: understanding interpretations of violence in picturebooks across two distinct cultures. TA is therefore helpful in identifying patterns across the Australian data, the Ukrainian data, and across both. In addition to describing the common *shared meanings*, TA is useful for exploring the *latent meanings* (Braun & Clarke, 2012) implied by the research participants, but not always verbalised. Finally, the method allows for the deep engagement with the data that may assist in both generating a theory and enabling the participants' voices to be heard in the final written document.

The flexibility of TA comes with both opportunities and responsibilities. The flexibility of TA allows for the free choice of theoretical approach and the style of interpretation. Different paradigms may be compatible with the method. Both inductive and deductive modes of working with data can be applied. The analysis can focus on semantic meanings and be more descriptive, or on latent meanings and be highly interpretive. The responsibility is that the data for TA should be rich and relevant to the research questions. Also, despite the strong emphasis on the need for high quality data, TA acknowledges the importance of the role of the researcher for the analysis. In this study, there are 30 interviews: 19 shorter interviews in Ukraine (77,130 words of transcribed text) and 11 longer interviews in Australia (103,872 words of transcribed text).

In some ways, TA resembles the GT method called Constant Comparison Method, CMM (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) described in the *Discovering Grounded Theory*. Similarly, TA also requires continuous comparison of data items and follows a similar path: coding, integrating the codes into themes, and writing a final report. However, unlike classical grounded theory, TA does not use line by line coding as its primary interest lies in commonalities across the entire data set. The other distinctive feature of TA in comparison to traditional GT method is that the active role of the researcher is recognised. It is emphasised that codes and themes "do not simply 'emerge' from the data. Rather, analysis is constructed at the intersection of the data and the researcher's theoretical assumptions, disciplinary knowledge, and research skills and experience" (Clarke et al., 2015). In addition, TA uses well-defined procedures. It consists of 6 phases: (1) familiarization, (2) coding, (3) "searching" for themes", (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes and (6) writing a report (Clarke et al., 2015). Some of these phases may take place simultaneously and be repeated several times before clarity is gained. TA is not a linear process. The

researcher is encouraged to move back and forth within the data set and between the phases.

The first step is to become intimately familiar with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Familiarization can be defined a process or reading and re-reading of the entire data set "in a curious and questioning way" (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 231) that allows the researcher to see passages relevant to the research questions. It aims at "reading the words actively, analytically, and critically" (Clarke & Braun, 2012, p. 61). The reading is complemented by taking notes. The notes serve as working material and unlike themes they do not need to look clear and concise. They simply help to identify the significant chunks of data to work with in future stages. The guiding questions asked during this phase can be: What are the reasons for such interpretations by participants? What are the implications of these interpretations?

When the data seems familiar, for the coding process can begin. Coding helps to shift the research "from description to conceptualisation" (Charmaz, 2002, p. 683) and to move beyond the most obvious and trivial meanings. It is an important stage for drafting the major directions for further exploration. Clarke et al. (2015) state that "TA coding is flexible and organic, you can tweak existing codes as you work through the data, explaining or contrasting them, splitting them into two or more codes or collapsing similar codes together, to better fit your developing analysis." (p. 235). Therefore, refining the codes makes the analysis more manageable and the collection of codes less repetitive.

TA may use both inductive and deductive strategies (Clarke et al., 2015). The data can be analysed inductively (the codes are generated prior to consulting academic literature) or deductively (all the codes are searched for through the lenses of a particular theoretical framework). In this research, I used inductive TA. Each code consisted of a short phrase that clearly identified a *key aspect* of interpreting violence in picturebooks and that might have served as an independent item to work with even without re-reading the whole data set at the later stages of analysis.

After the coding was complete, the search for themes could begin. To identify the relevant themes, I highlighted all the text passages that sounded like summaries, explanations or conclusions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) answering the research questions, as well as passages that were very important to the interviewees. Later, some of the concepts and stories combined into the themes. All the themes were analysed and some smaller themes

were synthesised into bigger categories. Then, the themes were refined and named. It is said that "good theme names capture the essence of each theme - and may use a particularly compelling data quotation to do so" (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 240). The final stage is writing a report. Although, "there is no clear separation between analysis and writing in TA" (Clarke et al., p. 241), it is important to verbalise of the findings in a clear and concise manner.

Application for this research

I have applied the TA method for analysing both the picturebooks and interviews. It was useful to see what themes appeared across a set of picturebooks in order to identify certain patterns in the representations of violence. In addition, TA was invaluable for constructing codes and themes within the interview data.

The guiding questions used for familiarisation with the data in this study were: How do research participants interpret violence in picturebooks? Why do they interpret it this way? What are the cultural and theoretical assumptions underpinning these interpretations? What are the possible implications? In this study, I have familiarised myself with the data during transcription, and later by reading and re-reading the transcripts.

I coded the whole data set several times. An inductive approach was employed to see what codes could be identified within the data. I used many *action codes* (Charmaz, 2002), short phrases starting from a verb in gerund because they are said to be a useful tool for inductive analysis. I was aware that "the codes reflect the researcher's interests and perspectives as well as the information in the data […] through the prism of their disciplinary assumptions and theoretical perspectives" (Charmaz, 2002, p. 683). Therefore, I repeated the coding three times. The aim was to move beyond the explanations that appeared to be obvious to me toward a deeper and richer understanding of the data. The last round of coding was necessary to see if the number of codes should be reduced, increased or changed in any other way.

At first, I gathered all the codes in a separate document and organised them into clusters. Then, I combined some codes together, for example "exploring history" was compinged with "exploring culture" inro "exploring history and culture". Later, I searched for links between codes, for instance, both "self-defence" and "military defence of one's

country" had a common goal, to explain how books representing violence may lead to a much broader discussion with an educational value. Finally, the groups of codes were combined into themes. The themes were compared, contrasted and integrating into one narrative.

Finally, I used visuals to further unite the codes and themes to represent my findings. After creating the draft visuals, I wrote the report and refined the visuals. The final versions of visuals are the figures 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 in this thesis. The titles of the visual representations of findings were used as headings and subheadings (e.g., child-centred dimension) in the thesis.

3.6. Quality assurance (QA)

The QA techniques of this study are strongly influenced by its belonging to the social constructionist paradigm, and its grounding in relativist and realist philosophical traditions (Crotty, 1998). Relativists believe in the existence of multiple realities, and consequently, the language and the ways of demonstrating the trustworthiness of research in this paradigm differ from a positivist way of reasoning (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After all, "the belief in multiple realities is inconsistent with attempts to judge the adequacy of singular versions" (Seale, 1999, p. 49). Although such an approach is "rejecting the notion of an objective universal truth, it accepts the possibility of specific local, personal, and community forms of truth" (Kvale, 1996, p. 231). In this study, the presence of multiple truths is anticipated, and the judgment of those truths is undertaken with the assistance of QR terms.

The relativist criteriology of quality assurance has undergone a lengthy conceptual evolution. It started from the denial of positivist criteria and attempts to invent new criteria. Seale (1999) explains that because non-positivist paradigms highly value "creativity, exploration, conceptual flexibility and a freedom of spirit" (p. 43), many new concepts were coined to replace passivistic terms. For example, in 1980-1990s, the proposals of QR researchers to replace internal and external validity include "successor validity, catalytic validity, interrogated validity, transgressive validity, imperial validity, simulacra/ironic validity, situated validity, voluptuous validity […] 'apparent', 'instrumental' and 'theoretical'

validity." (Seale, 1999, p. 43). However, over time, the researchers from both philosophical camps chose to establish a common ground for judging quality in order to be able understand each other.

Eventually, Lincoln and Guba (1985), suggested that QA criteria should be based on the same four questions that are used in the positivistic research, however the emphasis should shift (p. 290). The queries were concerned with truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (see Table) and aimed at encouraging the reader to question if research is trustworthy in a systematic and consistent way. This led to the emergence of parallel criteria in quantitative and qualitative research, where *internal validity* is replaced by *credibility*, *external validity* corresponds to *transferability*, *reliability* is an analogue of *dependability*, and the place of *objectivity* is taken by *confirmability* (Lincoln & Guba; 1985, p. 300). In 1989, a fifth criterion, authenticity, was added. Authenticity aims at ensuring quality in qualitative research because, as Lincoln and Guba believed, it is not enough to simply adapt the criteria of positivist tradition to describe relativist research.

In conducting this study, I devoted substantial effort to ensure its trustworthiness. Therefore, at each stage of the research I employed QA strategies to ensure the study was credible, transferable and dependable. Additionally, to ensure authenticity, I reflected on my personal bias.

Table 2

Criteria for Quality Assurance (Guba and Lincoln, 1985; 2013; Silverman, 2005)

Questions about the quality of any research:	Criteria for positivistic (conventional) paradigm:	Criteria for constructionist (naturalists) paradigm:	QA techniques used in this research study:
Truth value	internal validity	*credibility*	*a) triangulation:* 1. triangulation of sources; 2. triangulation of methods; 3. theory triangulation; *b) exceptional-case analysis*

Applicability	external validity or generalisability	*transferability*	*thick description*
Consistency	reliability or replicability	*dependability*	*a) clear research design;* *b) the adequacy of transcripts;* *c) comprehensive data treatment;* *d) inquiry audit*

3.6.1. Credibility

Unlike internal validity that strives to prove that there is a strong causational relation between elements of the study, credibility refers to a number of techniques used to demonstrate that the study findings are trustworthy and meaningful even when multiple interpretations are possible. To assure a study is credible, Seale (1999) suggests a focus on "triangulation, member validation, analytic induction and the search for negative instances" (p. 52-53). Similarly, Silverman (2005) mentions triangulation, refutability principle, the constant comparative method, deviant-case analysis, using appropriate tabulations and others (p. 212). Lincoln & Guba (2013) explain that credibility techniques may include "prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation of sources, methods, theories, and researchers, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and member checks" (p. 104). This study employs such credibility techniques as triangulation and deviant-case analysis.

3.6.1.1. Triangulation

The constructionist research perspective presumes that the application of different methods or theories to the same data, or the replication of the same study by various scholars inevitably generates different results. Therefore, the positivist method of triangulation of findings is not helpful in this instance. Nevertheless, the triangulation

(Denzin, 1970) is still used by constructionists because "understanding inconsistencies in findings across different kinds of data can be illuminative and important" (Patton, 2015, p. 661). There are many types of triangulation. Patton (2015) explains that it can involve "gathering and analysing multiple perspectives, using diverse sources of data, and during analysis, using alternative frameworks" (p. 652) depending on the demands of the research. This study employs triangulation of sources.

To start with, this study combines two distinct sets of data: interviews with Australian and Ukrainian gatekeepers. Various cultural perspectives on violence in picturebooks are compared. Furthermore, there is a triangulation of sources within the data, as various representations of violence are constantly compared and contrasted and more than 30 distinct perspectives on violence in picturebooks are gathered through the interviews. Silverman (2005) refers to this type of triangulation as *the constant comparative* method (pp. 213-214) explaining that the research is likely to be more credible if the researcher is repeatedly moving between different interview transcripts to see if one case can be supported by others. This QA strategy is in line with the GT methodology and RIM method as both require constant comparisons within the data.

According to Seale (1999), critics of triangulation claim that the convergence of all the evidence is not the proof of correctness. What if everyone is wrong? What if all the methods selected for the study led to false conclusions?

The other potential challenge of triangulation is the incompatibility of data sources, methods or theories. Bloor (1997) says that this problem arises when the researchers try to compare "chalk with cheese" (p. 38). It is further elaborated that:

> Findings collected by different methods will rarely be of such a character that they can be readily compared so as to pronounce them to be matched or mismatched. All research findings are shaped by the circumstances of their production, so findings collected by different methods will differ in their form and specificity to a degree that will make their direct comparison problematic. (Bloor, 1997, p. 39)

Yet another challenge with triangulation is that even if data sources are compatible and the convergence of findings can provide evidence of trustworthiness, what if the

findings contradict each other and do create a single picture? This is not a reason for a concern because according to Patton (2015) "reasonable explanations for differences in data from divergent sources can contribute significantly to the overall credibility of findings" (p. 662). Therefore, the triangulation of sources was used in this study.

3.6.1.2. Exceptional and unique cases

In addition, to triangulation, other techniques were used. Whereas, triangulation focused on similarities and generalisations, exceptional cases technique was concerned with unique pieces of data. Research cases that contradict the main argument are called the *negative* and *discrepant* (Becker, 1998, pp. 211-212), or *deviant* (Silverman, 2014, p. 64) cases. However, because all these terms bear negative connotations and the baggage of cultural meanings (e.g., *deviancy* is now often replaced by *diversity* in sociology to avoid negative overtones), I use the term *exceptional* case instead. An analysis of cases that differ from majority is "a strategy for pursuing explanations that have greater rather than lesser credibility as good accounts of the social world" (Seale, 1999, p. 82). It requires careful examination of those instances that stand out and differ significantly from all the other cases within the data.

This QA technique is a common practice in qualitative research for a number of reasons. Silverman (2014) explains that exceptional cases can complement the major findings as they show how context influences the findings. In addition, Seale (1999) states that exceptional instances can help "to guard against culpable error, arising from too great an attachment to the personal perspective or values of the individual researcher" (p. 75), and therefore this technique can demonstrate that the study is not overtly biased. Moreover, it is said that the qualitative researcher should avoid the temptation to oversimplify the findings by ignoring the arguments that do not fit, "it is never enough to illustrate good ideas with supportive examples. The grounding of theory in empirical evidence requires comprehensive searching and systematic scrutiny" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 191). Similarly, Mason (2002) urges the researcher not to exclude the "elements that might inconveniently counter" (p. 124) the main argument, because those elements can enrich the findings by illuminating a broader picture.

Furthermore, the inclusion of contradictory instances "supports multiple perspectives and polyvocality" (Seale, 1999, p. 73) which is one of the essential features of constructionist research. Overall, exceptional-case analysis can serve three main purposes: to support the main findings, to challenge and modify the researcher's initial assumptions, and to provide additional explanations about the contexts and situations where the findings are applicable (Peräkylä, 2004; Seale, 1999; Silverman, 2014).

In exceptional cases analysis, the cases that contradict the main categories derived from the constant comparison of the data must be re-examined with special attention. The researcher should ask themselves: Why is this case different? What unique feature of the context influences this case? After the answer is found, the next exceptional case should be considered. This process continues until "generalization is able to apply to every single gobbet of relevant data" (Silverman, 2005, p. 215).

The data that can be used for this technique is varied. Seale (1999) states that examination of exceptional instances can be helpful for analysing interviews as well as text documents (pp. 75-76). Consequently, this study employs exceptional-case analysis for ensuring high quality standards for both the interview and picturebook analyses. In the case of interviews, the diversity of cases is expected because I used maximum variable (representative) sampling and theoretical (purposive) sampling strategies. The perceptions of gatekeepers who belong to different genders, cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, age groups and occupations cannot be the same by default. The aim is to embrace variety, complexity and a polyphony of voices by examining the differences.

3.6.2. Transferability

The constructionists do not believe in the universality and generalisability of findings, and accordingly do not support the claim that findings derived in a particular context can be easily generalised and applied in a different context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). Instead, qualitative research caters for transferability of the findings to ensure the high quality and applicability of their work.

Potentially, the readers of this study do not live in Australia or Ukraine and have never visited a school, a library or a bookstore in those countries. How should they know then if the findings of this study are going to be applicable in their cultural context? To

address this potential risk, this study employs a transferability technique called “thick description” in order to provide readers with plenty of context.

Thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) can be defined as “the salient features of the context” or as “everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the findings” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 124). Further, it is explained that it is very important to describe the context of the study in detail, as this allows the reader to make their own judgements of whether the findings are applicable to their own context. The descriptions should be “vivid and convincing” enough to assist in the transferability of research findings, even many years after the study was conducted (Kvale, 1996, p. 234). Seale (1999) claims that a common way to use *thick description* is by observation and the profound *immersion* of the researcher into the study field (p. 108). In this study, I described the Australian and Ukrainian contexts in detail (see Section 1.7) and created profiles of the research participants (see the Appendix). With this information, the reader can visualise the connection of the findings and the contexts, and decide if the findings can be applied in a different context. Finally, as this study uses a representative sampling strategy and examines two very different cultural contexts, it is hoped that many readers will be able to connect to the study and find the results of this study valuable.

3.6.3. Dependability

Sampling, data collection, data analysis and interpretation are important considerations for ensuring research dependability. Dependability is a relativist criterion that corresponds to the positivist term reliability. Reliability “refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions” (Silverman, 2005, p. 224). Moreover, Seale (1999) explains that we can distinguish internal and external reliability. Internal reliability “refers to the extent to which different researchers identify similar constructs” (Seale, 1999, p. 42) in the same manner. External reliability is “the overall replication of research findings” (p. 42) The idea of reliability is highly problematic in qualitative research. Although the idea of seeking an external audit is useful (Guba & Lincoln, 1985), the replicability of qualitative research may be pointless because the replication of a qualitative study will inevitably lead to different results. Moreover, replication attempts may lead to “painful disputes between researchers,

and damage[e] confidence in qualitative social research" (Seale, 1999, p. 142). Despite the problematic origins of the concept of dependability, it plays a valuable role in ensuring the consistency, integrity and clarity of the research (Seale, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 2013).

The problems that might arise, should the researcher ignore dependability techniques, are: an unreliable sample, unreliable data and, consequently, unreliable findings. Silverman (2005) warns that anecdotalism, relying on a few random examples or having unclear criteria for selecting a sample, is as much of a threat to quality of the study as the unwillingness of a researcher to share the original data with the readers. Both may lead to a situation where the readers are denied the opportunity to make their own conclusions. The techniques that can be employed to avoid these two problems are: clear research design, comprehensive data treatment and inquiry audit.

To communicate complex ideas in a simple way and to assure the audience that they can rely on the findings, clear research design is imperative. Furthermore, appropriate methodological choices constitute "the adequacy of the design and the methods used for the subject matter and purpose of the study" (Kvale, 1996, p. 237). In this study, attention is dedicated to explaining and justifying decisions on the research paradigm, methodologies, methods, and sampling. Those decisions are described in detail because they influence the quality of data and, eventually, the quality of the findings.

The quality of data collected via interviews is circumstanced not only by the research design, but by the quality of interview questions, recordings and transcriptions. Peräkylä (2004) advocates for peer-review of transcriptions to assure that nothing is omitted. It is said that "the correction of transcripts" can be useful for having precise, meticulous and "rich" data that can be simplified later on if need be (p. 289). In my study, I asked three trusted Australian colleagues to listen to the transcripts and to double check several passages that I found problematic due to the cultural connotations that I might have misunderstood. In addition, I asked my colleagues to listen to the transcripts and to fill in any omissions. Also, I asked one trusted Ukrainian colleague to correct my Ukrainian transcripts as well as my translations into English to ensure that I did not leave out any valuable information. In this way, the data quality was checked before analysis occurred.

Comprehensive data treatment (Silverman, 2005, p. 214-215) is also employed. This technique requires that researchers remain open and honest about the data they use. Comprehensive data treatment helps to avoid potential misunderstandings and

misinterpretations between the researcher and the reader, as the reader can see the raw data for themselves, draw their own conclusions, and, if necessary, challenge the argument with new data to extend the existing body of knowledge. The data in this study are treated comprehensively in two ways: 1) transcribing has been done meticulously, and quotes from the transcripts used to illustrate arguments are long and comprehensive; 2) the discussed images from all the picturebooks are added to the Appendix. Therefore, the reader is welcome to judge and make conclusions themselves.

In addition to working with the data systematically, the entire research process follows a path of reliability that can be confirmed by external auditors. Guba and Lincoln (1985) compare the inquiry audit with the fiscal audit where the auditor is supposed to check the process and the product (p. 318). The research process can be checked by examining how the methodological and other research-related decisions are justified. The 'research products' to be audited are "the data, findings, interpretations, and recommendations" (Guba and Lincoln, 1985, p. 318). Not only is the inquiry audit important for persuading readers that the study is dependable, it also serves as a foundation for research confirmability.

3.5.4. Quality Assessment: Conclusions

The QA techniques employed in this study include output- and process-oriented paths of ensuring research quality. They address a number of questions, including:

1. Are the theoretical assumptions of the study carefully considered?
2. Is the research design appropriate (to the aim and scope of the study)?
3. Is the research process well documented? Are the research decisions justified?
4. Are the data reliable (collected and presented in a systematic and consistent way)?
5. Are the findings credible? Are the findings dependable?
6. Can the findings remain applicable in a different context?
7. Is the study authentic? Are the voices of both the researcher and research participants included?

The criteria for ensuring quality in this study are: credibility, transferability and dependability. The quality assurance techniques employed include triangulation, deviant-case analysis, thick description, clear research design, insurance of the adequacy of transcripts, and comprehensive data treatment. All of these elements provide assurance that this study is trustworthy.

3.7. The Researcher's Role: Personal Bias

In the past, researchers used to be secretive about their relationship to the studied phenomenon or their belonging to the studied community as this would have been seen as a threat to objectivity and neutrality (Johnson, 2002). However, since authenticity of research has been recognised as one of the cornerstones of research trustworthiness, the inclusion of the researcher's and the research participants' voices has become normalised. Rubin & Rubin (2005) explain that "researchers as well as conversational partners are individuals with emotions, biases, and interests." (p. 17). Instead of trying to objectify the findings of this research and trying to eliminate any bias, researchers that follow the constructionist paradigm should openly discuss their backgrounds.

To reveal the bias that influenced the way I interpreted the collected data, this section outlines my cultural, linguistic, educational and professional backgrounds, which will help explain the study's axiological assumptions. I was born in Ukraine, in the old multicultural Western Ukrainian city of Lviv. Despite living abroad for the last ten years, I consider myself Ukrainian and European. My way of thinking is strongly influenced by Western European culture, literature, and art. At the same time, I have been exposed to Japanese, Chinese and Indian cultures from early childhood, so Eastern philosophies are not foreign to me.

I am a multilingual. My mother tongue is Ukrainian, but I am also fluent in English, Russian and Polish, and have a working language proficiency in Spanish. Certainly, the languages I speak influence the way I perceive the world. I have been exposed to picturebooks and illustrated books since early childhood because my mother is an artist and our family has always had a huge collection of illustrated books (over 1,000 items). My parents read fictional books to me since I was born. These included Ukrainian fiction, translations of Western European literature (e.g., books by Brothers Grimm, Charles

Perrault, Astrid Lindgren, Otfried Preussler, Gianni Rodari etc.) and folktales from all over the world. After I learned how to read on my own, my parents encouraged me to read, draw and write my own books.

My first Bachelor of Arts degree was in book illustration. I studied history of book, history of material culture, art history, and practiced drawing, painting and calligraphy for four years. This degree taught me to love, respect and appreciate both verbal and visual narratives and to perceive the writer and illustrator as co-authors. My second degree is in English language and literature. I obtained this qualification in Poland, where I studied morphology, phonetics, literature, history of Great Britain and the USA, sociolinguistics, history of literature, English, Polish and Spanish languages. This experience broadened my horizons and changed my worldview. One of my BA theses was on CL (tales by Oscar Wilde). The other thesis was in sociolinguistics. Finally, I obtained MA in Literatures in English at the VU University Amsterdam, in the Netherlands. During the course of study, I undertook units on semiotics, narratology, postcolonial and feministic approaches to literature. My MA thesis explored the role of illustrations in different editions of *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll using narratology (Bal, 2009) as a framework.

I am a writer and an author of four published books for children of various ages. My first book is an illustrated collection of tales *Унікальна Картоплина [Unique Potato]* (2008). My second book is an illustrated novel for children ages 11-12 years, *Подорож до Котанії [Journey to Catland]* (2014). The third book is a young adult novel for teenagers at ages 15-16 years, *Намалюй мене пташкою [Draw Me as Though I Was a Bird]* (2014). The last book is a crossover, novel that can be read by teenagers and adults, Амстердам - Київ. І трохи святого Миколая *[Amsterdam-Kiev. And a Little bit About St Nicolas]* (2016). All of these books are written in Ukrainian. I have well-established relationships with several Ukrainian public libraries because I gave speeches and workshops there in 2009-2015.

3.8. Ethics

To ensure that this study meets high standards of research integrity and responsible scholarly conduct, I considered a number of ethical questions. To begin with, I have met the requirements of the University of Tasmania as my research proposal has been approved by the HREC (Human Research Ethics Committee). Then, I have obtained approval to conduct

the interviews with educators from the CET (Catholic Education Tasmania) and IST (Independent Schools Tasmania). Finally, in my research I have been guided by the principles of respect, honesty and safety. These principles are necessary to guarantee the research participants have not been deceived, their reputation has not been harmed and the information they share has not been misused (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Silverman, 2014).

In this research, respect and honesty were manifested through building trust and reciprocal professional relationships with the research participants before, during and after the interviews. Prior to each interview, the participants were asked to familiarise themselves with the Information Sheet (see the Appendix) which clearly explained the purpose of the study, clarified the ways in which the information could be used and gave examples of the questions which could be asked. It was explained to participants that their participation in the study was voluntarily and all the information would be kept anonymous and non-identifiable (unless they insisted on being identified). In addition, each participant was asked to sign a consent form (see the Appendix). During the interview, the participants were treated with respect. They could ask any additional questions, choose not to answer to the researcher's questions or stop the interview at any time. After the interview, the participants were sent the transcripts of the conversations, so they could verify the information.

Additionally, the safety and welfare of the research participants have been considered at all times: I ensured that the participants were never at risk, and that their words were not misused, as these are the common challenges in qualitative research (Mason, 2002, p. 143). Furthermore, Rubin and Rubin (2005) explain that when discussing the findings, the researchers must "decide whether the harm they might inflict in what they report is justified by the increased accuracy" (p. 35). Following this advice, I did not report any information that may potentially create any uncomfortable situation for the participants.

The confidentiality of participants was also considered. Because the study explores the interpretations of violence by CL gatekeepers it can be labelled as "sensitive research" (Cohen at al., 2011, p. 170). However, Creswell (2012) says that the grounded theory approach is suitable for research which discusses "sensitive topics" for the findings of the such a study "develop a general abstraction" (p. 440) and, hence, the privacy of participants

is protected. Both RIM and TA methods allow for anonymity and non-usage of identifiable data. Consequently, all the data gathered for the research remains anonymous.

In addition to anonymity, the voluntary nature of the study has been prioritised. Silverman (2014) explains that observations in public places (e.g., library) imply the consent to be observed, whereas private conversations such as in-depth interviews require informed consent. Warren (2002) adds that an oral informed consent can be enough in cases where interviewees are worried about their anonymity when it is "tape-recorded" (p. 89). In this study, the research participants were volunteers who agreed to sign an informed consent form (see the Appendix) and take part in the study at their own discretion and without coercion. Several participants declined to write their surname, however agreed to sign the document. Others stated that they wished for their real name to be acknowledged in the thesis. Because the participants are treated as *conversational partners* (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), their preferences were taken into account; the participants retained the right to refuse the use of their direct quotations at any time. However, the general findings of the research constructed by both the researcher and participants would remain due to their abstract nature and collaborative nature.

The data from this study consist of MP3 audio recordings in English and Ukrainian, transcripts of audio-recordings in English and Ukrainian, translations of the Ukrainian transcripts into English, the archival log, and the file which matches code names with real names. The personal data were made re-identifiable**,** therefore all significant identifiers (e.g., names, names of institutions) were removed and replaced by a code which consisted of a number of an interview and the first letter of the participant citizenship. For example, 001U can be interpreted as the interview number one, with a Ukrainian research participant. All documents containing identifiable information are securely stored.

To conclude, this study was guided by the ethical principles of respect, honesty and concern for the participants' welfare. The necessary ethical approvals from the HREC, CET and IST were obtained. The participants were provided with the information sheet, explain the aims of the study, and they participated in this study voluntarily. All the data are re-identifiable and the privacy of participants is respected.

3.9. Challenges and Limitations

There were a number of challenges in this study. These challenges included the time-consuming nature of a qualitative study requiring transcription, translation and manual analysis, as well difficulties with recruitment. I also experienced certain institutional barriers: apparently, at the time when this study was conducted the research topic it explored was not deemed by the Department of Education to be a priority for Tasmanian public schools. The Australian teachers working in public schools could therefore not be approached. This resulted in an unequal number of research participants from both countries.

Another challenge was to frame each interview question in the careful, yet explicit way. Questions about the interpretation of violence could not be straightforward or blunt, as they might have been perceived as disrespectful, judgmental or accusing. For example, it would have been inappropriate and simplistic to state that the picturebook page we look at represents violence and then ask, “Do you like it? Would you show it to a child?”. Also, if the participants preferred to omit certain questions and to talk about other issues, I would follow the thread of conversation as long as it was relevant, and would attempt to redirect conversation back to violence if the participants digressed substantially.

As mentioned previously, discussing censorship during audio-recorded interviews was challenging: the research participants did not want to be perceived as censors. After several refusals to talk about it on record, I concluded that CL censorship was a sensitive topic, and obtaining an authentic data might not be feasible in the current circumstances. Therefore, I decided to be guided by my research participants and modified one of the research questions. Also, I discovered that a more promising approach was to ask participants about the age limit they would put on certain books and why, as well as to inquire about the successful strategies of discussing picturebooks depicting violence in a classroom.

Qualitative research is a time-consuming and complex approach that requires use of emergent and dynamic procedures, the acknowledgement of context, equality in the researcher-participant relationships, careful consideration of potential ethical issues, lengthy passages to describe the findings, and the creation of complex questions both at the beginning and at the end of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I have encountered these challenges; however, the complex and lengthy processes enriched the findings.

3.10. Chapter Summary

This chapter provided explanation, justification and elaboration on how this study was conducted. It started from the more general overview of the interpretive framework, moved toward methodology and methods, and finished with explanations of the human factor in this research: researcher's bias, quality assurance and ethical procedures undertaken. The study is situated within the field of qualitative research. It employs the constructionist paradigm (Burr, 2015), hence, meaning is co-constructed by a researcher and the research. The grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) is consulted to collect and analyse data. The participants, teachers and librarians, are recruited in accordance with theoretical sampling. They are interviewed in accordance with the RIM method (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). All the interviews are recorded, transcribed manually and then analysed in line with RIM and TA (Braun & Clark, 2012). The Ukrainian citations were translated into English. The quality is assured by a number of strategies. The research bias and ethical considerations are taken into account.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents findings of the study. It reveals how the main the gatekeepers of picturebooks in educational settings perceived their roles in Australia and Ukraine, and how they define violence. Also, in this chapter, I explore three dimensions of the decision-making process during picturebook selection, namely: child-centred, book-centred and contextual. Additionally, I present several strategies used by the gatekeeper to curate books and supervise child's access to books

Sections of the chapter include many citations from the research participants. To ensure anonymity, the names of participants are replaced with three digits which constitutes a number of an interview and a letter referring to the participant citizenship. For example, 001U should be read as a citation from the interview number one, with a Ukrainian research participant; 022A are data from the interview number twenty two, with an Australian research participant.

4.1. Gatekeepers of picturebooks: selecting picturebooks

This section answers the following research questions: Who are the gatekeepers of picturebooks in educational contexts, and who selects the books for children's library collections? The data revealed that while there are many stakeholders in the gatekeeping process, teachers, librarians and parents are mostly responsible for selecting books for children and encouraging or discouraging children from reading them in both countries. The data revealed two cultural differences between the Australian and Ukrainian gatekeeping processes. First, Australian teachers and librarians believed they had more agency in selecting picturebooks for library collections in comparisons to what the Ukrainian participants believed about themselves. Second, the child's agency in the selection process was exercised differently in Australia and Ukraine: the Australian participants tended to assume what children like based on their previous experience, book reviews, and other information; the Ukrainian participants tended to have one-to-one conversations with the most active readers and ask them about their preferences.

The interviews indicated that selecting picturebooks for libraries and classroom book collections was a responsibility of many parties including librarians and teachers. Decisions

about picturebook selection were sometimes influenced by principals, counsellors, school psychologists and other staff members, as well as policy makers and curriculum developers. Furthermore, they were impacted by children who could express their preferences.

In Australia, teachers and librarians were often perceived as the decision makers who select books for library collections and classroom bookshelves. For example, a librarian, 020A confirmed, “My responsibilities in terms of developing the picturebook collections was to source the books and make purchasing decisions” (020A). Furthermore, the selection process was not standardised or centralised; it might look different in each school or library, depending on which stakeholders participated most actively and on how much agency children were granted.

Before the Australian Curriculum was introduced in 2010, collaborative decision-making happened in a relatively spontaneous manner. When asked, who chose the books for the library collection in the past, 027A explained, “We participated. … There were fellow-teachers, librarians that we worked closely with. If I saw something I liked, or something I heard about… Yes. But there was no system. It was just what happened. I finished [teaching] before we had the National Curriculum” (027A). At the same time, the picturebooks had to go through different levels of gatekeeping before they were approved. 027A added, “But we have so many layers. [Picturebooks] have to go though many tutors… through the head of faculty” (027A). Consequently, even if the decision-making process was not always documented, it seems that there was an unspoken system of collegial decision-making and some auditing in place.

After the Australian Curriculum was implemented, some schools adopted written policies explaining how books should be selected. Here, there was a clear division of responsibilities between decision-makers and advisors. 024A, an active user of a library collection development policy, explained that such decisions are made collegially in their school: in addition to teacher and librarian perspectives, the opinions of a counsellor, a school chaplain and clinically trained psychologist are considered. The librarian explained that if he was uncomfortable with a book requested by a teacher he would seek an advice from a counsellor, a school chaplain, or a psychologist. He reported that, “sometimes, they say, “Oh, no! Don't even think about that”, but sometimes I’ve been surprised that people, actually, say, “Yes, that would be very useful for us” … So, it’s a collegial process” (024A).

Other schools followed different patterns. For example, one of the teachers explained, “Each individual staff member is responsible for the library, all of us are responsible” (025A). When I asked who was responsible for purchasing books, she elaborated:

> The principal chooses… the responsibility ultimately lies with the principals who spend quite a lot of money on books each year. But also, each staff member can purchase books as well and add them to the library or their own classroom library. So, anybody, really. (025A)

In addition, the librarians would collaborate and consult with teachers if the book was controversial. For instance, 024A said, “When I'm dealing with material which is obviously controversial … I consult with teachers in whichever subject department is interested. With fiction, for example, it would be particularly but not exclusively, with our English department, English teachers” (024A).

In Ukraine, the librarians and teachers were responsible for selecting books for the library and school collections too. However, not all teachers and librarians could decide which books to select. Because the Ukrainian National Curriculum specifies the list of books that must be purchased and read, individual teachers have limited agency in selecting books. The teachers interviewed could make suggestions for changing the list of books in the Ukrainian National Curriculum or to purchase additional books for their classroom collection if they invested their own money. However, the major decision-makers were educators who had been developing and adjusting the Ukrainian National Curriculum. The Ukrainian librarians also had to comply with a hierarchal decision-making process: the major decision makers were senior librarians from a central division who would gather requests from the local libraries and then purchase some of those books. 001U, the head of one of the city public libraries explained, “We can express our wishes, we can request certain books based on children’s likes and dislikes … the book acquisition centre would select and purchase books. I can select books only if we have a sponsor’s money” (001U). The Ukrainian librarians explained that they had to consider financial obstacles. In some years, there was little or no money to purchase new books, therefore they would either purchase books using their own salaries or accept donations. In the case of donations, libraries could be sponsored by private organisations who gave librarians freedom of choice or they could

be given printed books by publishing houses, authors and parents. When the interviewed Ukrainian librarians had an opportunity to choose books themselves, they would read book reviews, attend book launches and book fairs, follow CL books clubs on social media and talk to their readers daily to decide which books to purchase.

In Australia and Ukraine, the decisions of adult gatekeepers were influenced by children. Teachers and librarians considered children's needs and preferences when selecting books. First, they could try to predict children's preferences based on their beliefs about readers. For example, the Australian participants said:

> I, probably, would have just selected the books which were popular at the time; popular and current at the time, and ones I felt children would enjoy. (029A)

> We have books that children talk about, that they are reading at home or love the sets of or enjoy this author. So, we make sure those books are in the library. (025A)

> If it sounds interesting and I think children will enjoy it, or if I think students can really learn from the text or a book … I also read reviews of books, and recommendations. I also take an account of what would be popular with the students currently. (028A)

Second, the teachers and librarians could anticipate children's needs by observing the books children borrowed and listening to children's responses about books they already read. For instance, one Ukrainian said, "Children follow fashion for certain books. If some popular kid read a book; the entire class reads it too. Even if they don't like reading books, they do … much later they shape their preferences: prose or poetry, detective stories, romances or fantasy" (004U). Furthermore, the Ukrainian participants believed that one-to-one conversations after the book was returned were essential. These conversations enabled the librarians to understand if children enjoyed a book or found it boring, or if children were likely to be frightened or upset by a book. The Ukrainian participants said:

> In my opinion, it is difficult to engage with a vast number of readers; however, the most effective way to engage with the most active readers is to talk with each child individually to discuss their likes and dislikes. (003U)

> We collect and write down children's requests demonstrating children's likes and dislikes. (001U)

> Children share their impressions with us. When they bring a book back, we ask them, "What did you like? What did you not like?". (013U)

> I always ask readers for their feedback about the books they read, "Did you like this book? What did you like in this book?" Of course, [I do not ask] if this is just a part of school curriculum and they have to read it. (008U)

Third, the gatekeepers could be guided by readers' requests of books they wanted to read. Children were asked about their preferences in Australia and Ukraine. For example, 028A explained, "I have a clipboard and a sheet where students can recommend books that they would like to see in the library. So, they have that decision-making tool" (028A). Similarly, 001U said they had a notebook where they write down readers' requests. Also, 011U said that children at age 11 or 12 "read a lot… and recommend some books to me… I thank them and write their recommendations down into a notebook with readers' requests. If I have an opportunity, I buy those books" (011U).

It was clear that the child's participation in the selection process varied from little agency, where gatekeepers guessed what students might like, to an active participation, where children told gatekeepers about their preferences directly. The children's influence on book selection processes seemed larger in Ukraine because the librarians regularly asked children for their opinions and did not seem to mind if picturebooks represented controversial topics. In Australia, children had certain agency too; however, the child's willingness to read a book could be challenged: if the book was controversial it had to go through stages of gatekeeping. 028A explained that if she had doubts about a book, she would consult her colleagues before purchasing it. She gave an example, saying, "Yes, I would possibly ask the teacher their opinion first. I did actually have a situation when a child

said that she wanted to read the *Diary of Anne Frank* [1947]" (028A). The librarian consulted with two teachers. One said that the book could be purchased because the parents of the child would not object. 025A explained that she replied, "I'm not so concerned about her parents not minding it, it's more that I don't want to give a child a book they are not ready for yet, or have not enough maturity to handle the themes". And she said, "It's up to you. It's your choice" (025A). Then, the librarian talked to another teacher, who said the novel could be too traumatising for a young child. Eventually, 025A made the decision to buy a picturebook about Anne Frank instead of ordering the original novel.

Other influencers in picturebook selection included publishing houses and scholars. In Australia, the decision to purchase a book could be influenced by the availability of the teachers' toolkits provided with some picturebooks. Some publishing houses were more eager to supplement their books with educational materials. In Ukraine, those decisions might also be influenced by third parties who could donate books (e.g., publishing houses, parents). Both in Australia and Ukraine, books promoted in book reviews were more likely to be purchased.

To summarise, several parties were involved in book selection in schools and libraries. However, despite the presence of other stakeholders, teachers and librarians were the major decision-makers in book selection processes in both countries.

4.2. Definitions of violence by gatekeepers

This section compares and contrasts definitions of violence suggested by Australian and Ukrainian gatekeepers. At the start of each interview, participants were asked to explain how they understood the concept of violence and to provide examples to illustrate this understanding. Australian and Ukrainian participants defined violence as something negative, harmful and unwanted. At the same time, there were some cultural differences in their perceptions of violence.

4.2.1. Australian definitions of violence: "something that harms"

Australian participants' definitions of violence were mostly concerned with the harmful effect of violence, as they almost all mentioned harm as a defining feature. Although the

physicality of violence was often emphasised, most of the time, Australian gatekeepers moved beyond the physical dimension of violence, and talked about verbal, psychological and emotional abuse in their definitions of violence.

The majority of Australian interviewees began by identifying violence as an action, a physical act of hurting others (e.g., killing, beating, maltreating others). For example, when asked to define violence in picturebooks, 023A responded by giving examples of kinds of book where such violence is represented, "An easy thing to say is *war books*. But there are books on bullying, domestic violence". Another definition by 027A was that "violence involves physical force. It means to hurt, damage, kill someone or something. That's straightforward". Clearly, physical violence was seen by the Australian respondents as the most obvious type of violence. Furthermore, these participants explained that the act of violence could be perceived differently by adults and children. 025A noted:

> For the four- to eight-year-olds, violence is not so much the act of hurting someone (as in war or as in the wolf eating Grandma), it is more what relates to them (like as in *Hansel and Gretel*). The four- to eight-year-olds didn't seem worried at all that the wolf ate Grandma, but they were really, really worried that mother and father would leave the children in the woods … So, that sort of violence is definitely something that the younger ones worried about more than the actual act of violence (025A).

This explanation clearly shows the distinction made between violence as it is understood by adults (e.g., killing) and the violence children can relate to (e.g., neglect, abandonment). At the same time, this quote offers insight into how the gatekeepers construct the image of the child reader in the context of discussing controversial picturebooks.

The presence of harm was often the defining characteristic. Harmful actions or speeches were perceived as violent. 027A summarised this by saying, "In my own words, I suppose, it's just something that harms". In addition, 030A said she would define violence as "an act of aggression against someone. Now, that act of aggression could be verbal; it could be physical, and often it would cause real hurt". This definition emphasised that violence was related to aggression and that the degree of harm caused by violence could vary. Also,

while previous definitions presented here focused on victims, the definition provided by 030A encompassed both victim and aggressor.

The inclusion of a psychological dimension in addition to physical and verbal harm was common. 031A defined violence as “anything that is physically, verbally, or psychologically damaging to someone else or harmful to someone else… So, if a person is targeting verbal or physical, or some sort of psychological action toward another person that would harm that person, that's being violent”. Here, the psychological aspect of violence was emphasised.

In addition, some Australian participants mentioned emotional violence. 029A reflected upon the topic, saying that violence was “an act against another person, a physical [act], or [one that] can even be emotional to a certain extent… which provokes a very strong feeling of fear and distaste” (029A). This definition brings certain subtlety to the discussion of violence as it points out that harm caused by violence can be emotional and may include strong emotional responses. Moreover, 026A explained:

> We could be speaking of physical violence, which would be where physical harm, I guess, comes to one or more people. And there is emotional abuse as well as mental abuse - I think that can also be included in how we think about violence, and how it impacts people. But usually, I guess, it is very simply harm to another person or persons, and for violence in most cases it would be intentional (026A).

This definition highlights two aspects of violence not identified by other interviewees: first, violence can be exercised upon individuals or groups; second, violence can be both intentional and unintentional. Such a definition excludes accidents, but covers genocide, discrimination and other types of collective maltreatment. Also, 026A made an important qualification here. This interviewee believed that personal intention is usually, but not always, associated with violence. By bringing in the concept of ‘intentionality’, this definition implied the link to ‘structural’ violence directed at groups of people (e.g., social injustice) where the intention to harm might be hardly visible.

Overall, Australian research participants defined violence as harmful action or behaviour against a person or a group of people, explaining that violence can be physical, verbal or emotional. Many noted that violence is intentional. At the same time, others

believed that the intention to harm might not be clearly visible. Finally, they claimed that violence could be perceived differently by adult and child readers.

4.2.2. Ukrainian definitions of violence: “limiting freedom”

Similar to their Australian colleagues, the Ukrainian participants spoke about physical and emotional dimensions of violence. For example, 003U said, “Violence is an amorphous category… starting from murder and finishing with crumpling up paper […] For instance, to crumple up a piece of paper because of anger is also an act of violence. All the emotions, all the anger is directed into that piece of paper”. However, while Australian participants mostly used a term *emotional violence*, the Ukrainian participants preferred a term *psychological violence*. For instance, 004U said, “there are many types of violence. Violence can be physical and psychological”. This difference could be attributed to the common use of the concept of *emotions* throughout the Australian interviews and the common use of words *feelings* and *psyche* in the Ukrainian interviews.

In addition, Ukrainian participants acknowledged the presence of harm as a defining criterion. 008U defined violence as “situations where harm or pain are caused, like torturing”. For the same reason, war was often mentioned as an example of violence. 019U said, “When there is a conflict, an armed military conflict” we could call it violence.

Another similarity between the Australian and Ukrainian definitions is the mentioning of verbal violence as a subcategory. Ukrainian participants said that “the abundant use of swear words is violence” (002U) and that “even communication [can be seen as violence], if you are forced to communicate with someone [and you do not want to]” (008U). This means that offensive words and forceful communication were also perceived as harmful and, perhaps, unwanted, therefore violent.

The Australian and Ukrainian definitions of violence acknowledged harm caused by social structures to a different extent. Australian definitions focused mostly on direct violence; if they ever implied structural violence, they did so indirectly. By contrast, Ukrainian participants talked explicitly about structural violence performed on an

institutional level. They insisted that structural violence co-existed with direct violence. 012U gave an extensive definition of such violence:

> What would I categorise as violence? How do I perceive it? Well, violence is derived from the word *force* [in Ukrainian], therefore, violence is when a stronger person forces a weaker one to do something against their will. This is a general definition. This might be a psychological violence or physical violence. I mean, it is not only physical abuse, a person can be positioned in such a state of affairs that she or he will do something she or he would not want to do. If we are talking about verbal violence (or perhaps, I ought to call it psychological violence), we should also mention a hidden violence used by the authority. In Ukraine, it is a very common form of violence executed through [low] salaries. … When in addition to your job responsibilities you are forced to do a lot of tasks which you find tedious, unnecessary and wrong, and when you are forced to do those for free, that is violence.

This definition shows a clear distinction between direct and structural violence. Furthermore, it explains how language and culture influence the understanding of an abstract concept of violence. The English noun ***viole**nce* has a similar root as the verb to ***viola**te*, whereas the Ukrainian noun *насильство* [*na**syl**stvo*] is derived from the noun *сила* [***syl**a*] that can be translated as *force* and *power*. This has implications for the ways people understand and interpret the word. Connotations of the word *syla* (force, power) are reflected in several of the Ukrainian responses when defining *violence*.

The Ukrainian interviews were distinctive in that most participants explicitly defined violence as imposing one's opinion on others, limiting one's freedom and oppressing those who are weaker. For example, 018U said, "Imposing one's opinion…. authoritarianism is a psychological violence. Physical violence also exists. But it is something completely different… The psychological violence is imposing one's opinion on others". She went on to give a few examples such as how some parents force children to read the books because they think this is best for their children even if they did not want to read them. During our conversation, I inquired about the relation between censorship and violence as a follow-up question:

H: Does this mean the censorship is form of violence?

018U: Yes, imposing one's opinion is. Parents do not give the child an opportunity [to choose the book]. … He wants to read about butterflies, and they [are saying] "No, you are going to read about *The Ransom of Red Chief* [1907]"

Also, 012U observed that contemporary wars often take place in the digital space as well as the physical world. He said that violence is "imposing one's opinion on others and forcing a person to do something. Information warfare is a type of violence too" (012U). In addition, school violence was described as peer pressure and imposing one's opinion on others. 010U said, "It is common among teenagers at home and at school. [They say,] "You are not dressed the way you should be"; "You are not what you are supposed to be"; "You do not look at me the way you should" – all of this is violence". Similarly, 018U reflected, "Violence… If we remember how we were educated, we will see a lot of violence. [We were told,] "What would people say? Do as others do!" – this is violence". The psychological pressure created by an individual or group was therefore seen as a violation of people's freedom of choice.

Perceiving violence as a limitation of one's freedom was also common. For example, 007U explained, "Violence happens not only when the physical force is applied or when a [victimised] person feels physical pain. Violence is limiting one's freedom, limiting one's independence". Similarly, 002U said, "Violence is denying one's right to safety, to freedom, to happiness". This definition seems quite similar to a previous one because the idea of forcefully imposing one's opinion on others involves depriving them of freedom to decide for themselves. However, limiting freedom is a broader idea than forcing others to think in a certain way.

Furthermore, violence was perceived as oppression. Many Ukrainian participants defined violence as an oppression, of being forced to do an unwanted action and to accept an unwanted condition. For example, 002U claimed that "violent acts of entitled people against a vulnerable individual is the worst form of violence". In addition, 008U said:

Violence is an oppression, a limitation of one's freedom. This can be a physical violence, this can be a psychological violence, this can be moral violence, visual

> violence, audial violence and aesthetic violence. Violence is when something foreign is imposed on you. You may be against it, you may disagree, but you are forced to do it anyway. (008U)

Also, 013U said that violence is "oppression; it is cruelty; it is imposing one's thought on others. These are the most terrifying forms of violence" (013U). Similarly, 019U explained that violence does not have to be bloody or include weapons; it can be a more subtle type of violating someone's rights by forcing them to take an unwanted action. To illustrate this type of violence, she told a folktale about a man and a cockroach. The cockroach lived in a cave, but the man entered the cave and banished the insect. This unjust action was perceived as violence by some Ukrainian students. In this way, the Ukrainian participants referred to a wide range of *structural violence* where oppressing others was a more intense type of violence compared to limiting one's freedom and influencing other people's opinions. Also, the above responses highlighted that *to oppress* others was perceived as a more extreme form of violence than harming them physically.

Another attempt to establish a hierarchy of violence was made by 004U who said, "psychological violence is sometimes worse than physical because it does not leave scars on the body, but it leaves traces on the psyche, and it is much more difficult to deal with the latter…". This idea could be surprising for some because, in a country suffering from war, one might expect physical violence to be considered the worst. However, as the findings demonstrated, the interviewed Ukrainian gatekeepers of children literature paid equal attention to physical and psychological violence.

Overall, like the Australian gatekeepers, Ukrainian participants defined violence as a harmful and unwanted force. However, they also defined it as an attempt to impose one's opinion on others, limit one's freedom and oppress others. They also tried to establish a certain hierarchy among different types of violence. Some emphasised structural violence as much worse than direct violence; others highlighted how psychological violence could be more harmful than physical violence.

4.2.3. Cultural differences in definitions of violence

There were some differences between Australian and Ukrainian perceptions of the term *violence*. Australian definitions often focused on how harm can be caused with behaviour, actions, words, and thoughts of a person or a group of people, whereas the Ukrainian definitions mostly focused on the victims of violence emphasising that violence involves a lack of freedom, domination and oppression. Perhaps historical, cultural and linguistic differences were behind the variety of definitions. This had certain implications for the further discussion of violence in picturebooks.

4.3. Curating picturebooks: three dimensions

This section presents three dimensions of gatekeepers' decision-making when deciding if books are appropriate for children. During the second half of each interview, participants were presented with and asked to comment on Australian and Ukrainian picturebooks representing violence. In this way, participants from each country looked at familiar texts from their own country, as well as those from the other country. In addition, participants were encouraged to speak about their own examples of picturebooks representing violence. The aim was to understand how the book curating process worked: why and how the books representing violence were selected for a school or library collection. The Appendix lists all questions that were asked; however, some questions included:

- What is your interpretation of this scene in the picturebook?
- At what age is this picturebook aimed?
- Would you recommend young readers to read this book? Why? Why not?
- Would it be more appropriate for such a book to be read with parents at home or to discuss it in the classroom with a teacher? Or should the child read it on their own? Why?

Participants from both countries insisted that each picturebook should be examined carefully before discussing it with a group of children in a classroom or even read as a bedtime story by parents. They explained in detail why they found some books more appropriate than others. Sometimes, when giving their own examples of books representing violence, the participants spoke about illustrated short stories, comics, graphic novels,

novelettes, poems and novels representing violence. However, their opinions on violence were similar to their perceptions of violence in picturebooks. Their decision-making processes could be understood in relation to three dimensions: child-centred, book-centred and contextual dimensions.

To begin, there was general agreement that since the picturebooks have been published by recognised publishing houses and offered for purchase by respectable bookstores, they should be appropriate. At the same time, there was a range of opinions on the age at which children should be allowed to read the books. Usually, arguments about *inappropriateness* would emphasise the child-centred dimension as participants thought of children's levels of maturity, emotional development, readiness to discuss the topic, abilities to comprehend topics mentally and sensitivity thresholds.

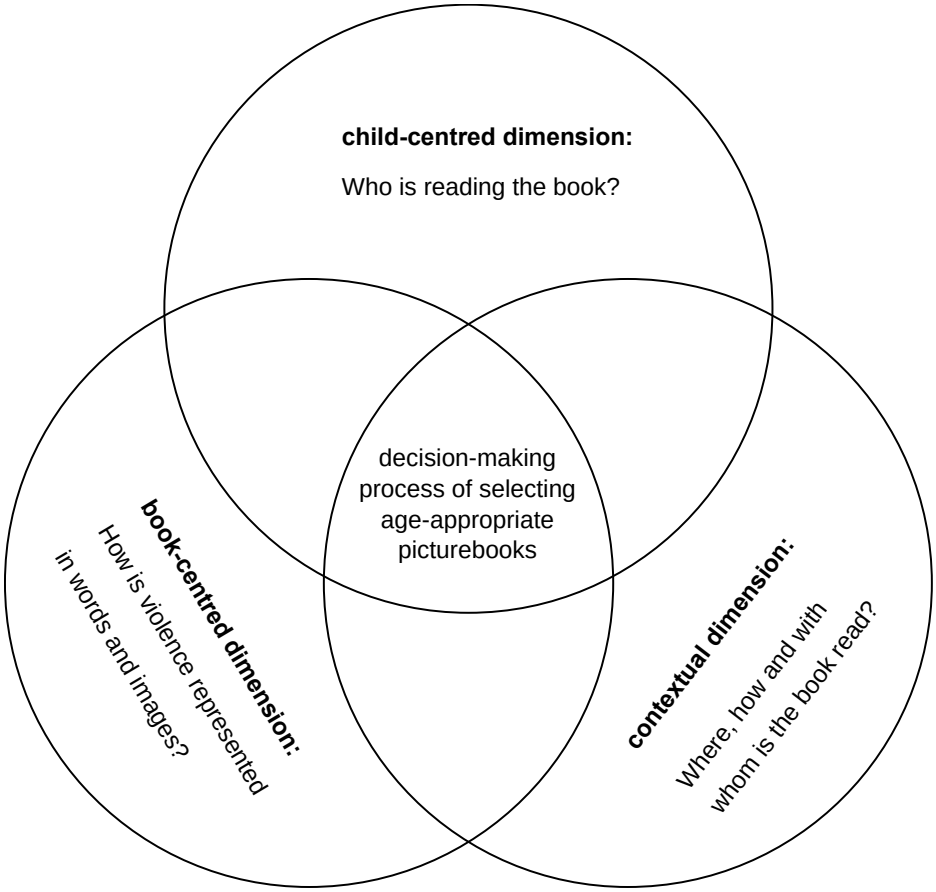
In addition, participants would judge the picturebooks through considerations of genre, characters, settings, and the amount and purpose of violence in the text. The style of illustrations was considered also; some illustrations were perceived as more child-friendly than others. These considerations could be seen as prioritising the book-centred dimension of the decision-making process.

Furthermore, the context was taken into account. The participants would pay attention to the previous publications by the same author, the alignment of the book with school policy and the curriculum, and the presence of an adult during the reading of a picturebook. After these careful considerations, a verdict would be made – the picturebook would be recommended to children; however, only after a certain age. This age limit would differ, ranging from 7 to 15 depending on the cultural background of the participant and their personal experience of recommending books to children.

To summarise, curating picturebooks representing violence involves complex processes of selecting picturebooks appropriate for a certain age and recommending them to readers. In addition, this may include the choice of the optimal mode of reading: discussing a book in a classroom with a teacher or reading the book at home with parents. The process of curating picturebooks has three dimensions: child-centred, book-centred and contextual, and gatekeepers prioritise one, two, or all three dimensions when deciding which books to select and recommend.

Figure 2

Dimensions of Decision-making Process in Picturebook Selection



4.4. The child-centred dimension: constructing the child reader

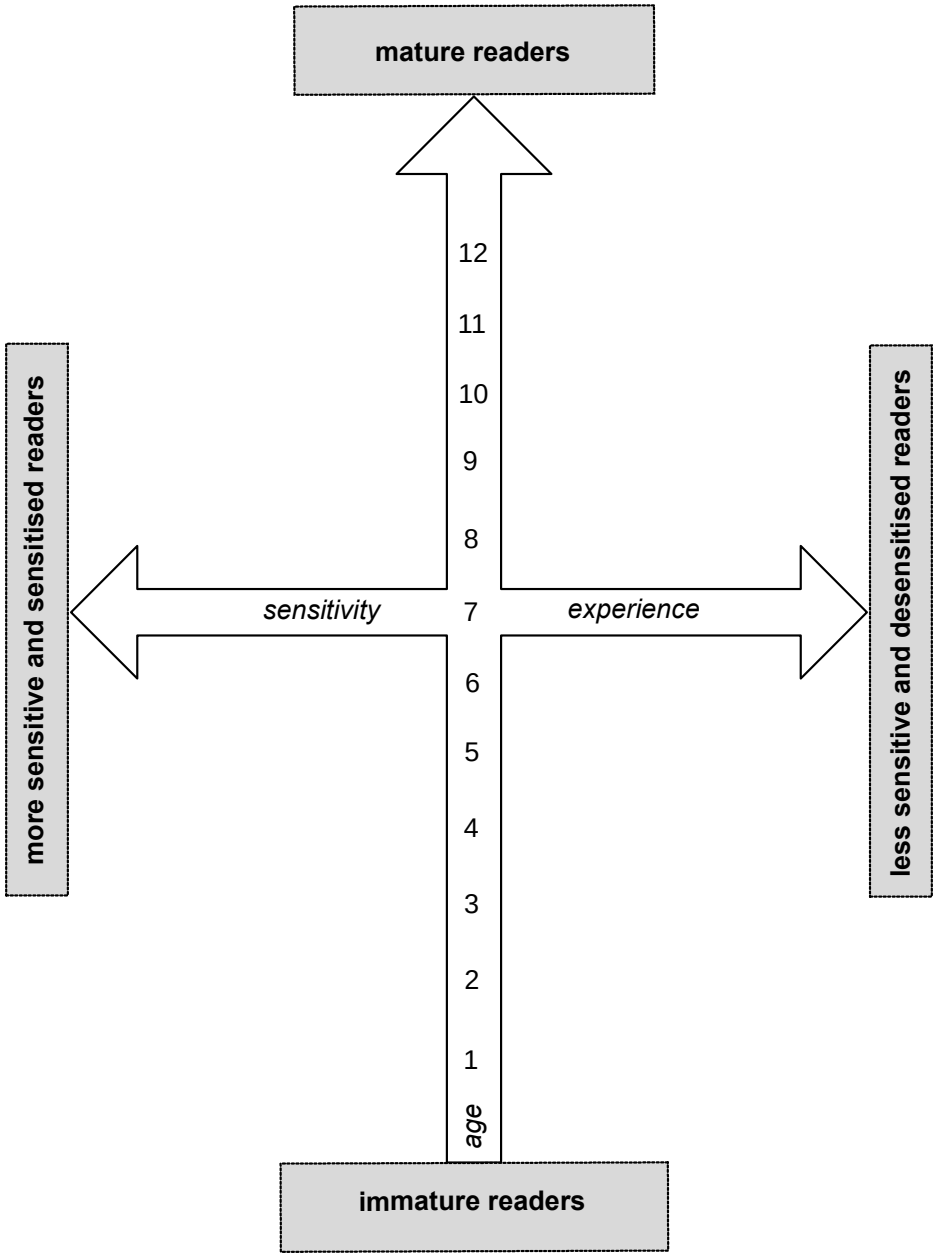
This section presents gatekeepers' perceptions of children reading picturebooks representing violence. It constructs four categories of young readers based on the gatekeepers' beliefs about the children. These categories are: naïve, scared, troubled and accomplished young readers. The gatekeepers believed that children respond to violence in picturebook differently according to their varied levels of maturity and sensitivity.

Children's *maturity* corresponded to their age and experience. Very young readers were often perceived as immature and not yet ready to comprehend nuanced topics and to cope with emotionally challenging topics. Upper primary school children and older were mostly seen as *mature* readers ready to comprehend complex messages, able to understand the *fictionality* of the story and to respond without fear to fictional narratives.

Children's *sensitivity* was often linked to their personality traits and past traumas. Children of any age could be perceived as *sensitive* readers. Very young and sensitive readers were seen as *scared* readers who would be afraid of monsters and other fictional threats. Whereas, upper primary school sensitive readers were seen as *troubled* readers – anxious and upset about the events described in the book.

Figure 3

Maturity and Sensitivity Levels of a Child Reader



4.4.1. Readers' maturity

Participants agreed that children's levels of maturity influenced their decision. Before recommending any book to a child, the participants would consider the child's ability to understand the topic on a cognitive level and their ability to cope with the topic emotionally. For example, 023A said about *The Great Bear* (2010), "I think it has to be for people who are old enough to understand that this sort of thing actually did happen. Because other than that it would just scare people … I keep thinking about my [6-year-old] grandson. I wouldn't show it to him". Furthermore, 020A explained, "you can be too young to be exposed to a book, not because it's going to scare you or give you nightmares or what sort of thing, but to really appreciate it: to get the humour or the message in it. Sometimes, it's just nice to wait until the kids get a little bit older, so they can really fully appreciate the book". The ability to appreciate the book and understand the message was often seen as a reliable marker for estimating the age of an implied reader. Consequently, abstract themes linked to violence (e.g., fighting for freedom) seemed too complex, or even overly nuanced and sophisticated to be properly understood by children who were developing their ability to think.

The Australian participants mentioned on several occasions that if a book explored controversial and nuanced themes, it was for older children. Books representing war seemed to be the most frequently noted for abstract, complex and nuanced ideas. Speaking about *The War that Changed Rondo*, three interviewees said the following:

> I guess, it can be read on multiple levels, with different complexities… [It might be] too much of an abstract idea for little people to understand. Would they take it literally? (028A)

> I think it's not going to be a particularly young child that would pick up these subtleties. (031A)

> I think it sounds like it is quite nuanced. (026A)

022A explained that *My Dog* (2001) was not appropriate for young children "because the subject matter is quite sophisticated. It is quite complex. The story is complex. And there is a role for that in... for older children" (022A). Therefore, to indicate an appropriate age for the audience of a given book, the participants assessed the level of abstraction, complexity, subtlety and sophistication, as well as the mental abilities of children to understand. At the same time, 028A pondered, "We sometimes don't give children credit, enough credit, and think that they can't think complexly and make those connections, whereas, they probably can" (028A).

The Ukrainian participants said children must reach a certain level of their mental development and be able to use abstract thinking before they can read books with difficult topics, including picturebooks representing violence. For example, 012U explained that, to read folktales like "Kotyhoroshko"[5], children need to understand what sacrifice is. He explained that children were ready to read this "after they developed some abstract thinking, after they learnt to understand the concept of *sacrifice* and that one can sacrifice their leg, but one can also sacrifice their time, their attention and their positive attitude" (012U). The main argument of the Ukrainian participants in relation to the lack of abstract thinking was that if a child was too young it would be *impossible to explain* the topic to the child. They said:

> Of course, if a child is younger than 5, it would not be possible to explain [*The War That Changed Rondo*] to them because they do not have these kinds of associations. (005U)

> This [*Australian Gnomes* (1979)] is for older children because it is impossible to explain to young children why this was necessary to do, why to brand. (010U)

> Is this [*Not Now, Bernard* (1980)] for young children? Maybe, this is for big parents? [laughing] This is horrible! It would be impossible to explain to young children who become a monster and why… as for me, this book is definitely not for young readers. (012U)

[5] Kotyhoroshko cuts up his own calf and gives it to the Gryphon to feed him

Therefore, the gatekeepers often worried that children might be confused and perplexed by sophisticated topics, whereas adults would not explain the situation to a child in a meaningful and helpful manner.

Furthermore, the Ukrainian participants suggested that the ability to comprehend violence in books depended on a child's previous reading experience: children were able to understand more sophisticated themes when they were vicarious readers. Looking at the illustrations in *Australian Gnomes* (1979), 010U said, "This book is not for young children. They will not be able to understand why animals used to be branded" (010U). 012U commented on the same illustration, saying, "My younger daughter who is a grade 3 student [9-year-old] would be able to comprehend this. However, when she was in a grade 1, I don't think she would understand. I would say, the more you read to a child, the faster the child will start to understand" (012U).

It was agreed that recognising the age when a child is *mature enough* for a given book is a challenging task because each child develops at their own pace. For example, 017U said, "Children have different levels of maturity. Some children read more serious books than others" (017U). In addition, 020A said, "When you are reading to a group, you have to factor in that you have the whole range of maturity levels in that group. They might have been the same age, but some are far less experienced than others" (020A). 031A said that measuring the *readiness* of children to read a book was often problematic because parents and teachers or librarians did not always agree on this. 031A concluded, "A lot of parents think, "but they [the child] can read the words". Yes, but it's not just the words. It's the content" (031A). A similar example was provided by 023A who said:

> I was startled when I had people in a bookshop coming (parents of children at the grade 3 and 4, 8-9-year-olds) and saying, "Oh, we have just read *Hunger Games*. What would you recommend that would be similar?" And I know, that is not a picturebook, but to me that was totally inappropriate for the child that age. And so, with the *Harry Potter* books. I kept saying to the parents, you know, "They came out once a year and your child should read them once a year, as they grow older". Because the books were written for the older children.

In the Australian interviews, the age limit would start from 7 or 8 [grade 2]. The participants often suggested that between pre-school age and the primary school age children would undergo a leap in their understanding of nuanced and complex situations. For example, 029A commented on *Not Now, Bernard* (1980), "I think after 7 is fine, when they are able to rationalise things a little bit more" (029A). Once again, the expected cognitive development of a child influenced the decision about the age of the reader. The majority of participants agreed that picturebooks representing violence were more appropriate for readers who were older than seven or eight (grade 2 upwards). 027A concluded that readers *My Mother's Eyes* (2011) "have to be older than 7 and 8", and 022A said that *My Dog* (2001) could be read by "grade 2 and onwards [7- to 8-year-olds]". 025A commented on *Yaroslavna's Lament* (2016 [1860]), a historical poem representing a queen waiting the king to return from war:

> Some of the mature eight to sixteen-year-olds would handle that all right. Because they write that sort of poetry themselves. When children write poetry, it's often very dark. But I wouldn't read that to the younger ones. This, "My sweetheart has died, I shall die too!" This part they wouldn't understand. (025A)

In this example the age of intended readership was quite broad: *the mature 8- to 16-year-olds*; however, anyone younger than eight was considered *not mature* enough to understand the complexity of the dark theme. Other Australian research participants mentioned the same age in their estimation. 020A said that picturebooks representing controversial and sophisticated topics could be discussed with "grade 2 upwards, when they [children] are starting to develop that sense of humour, and starting to develop a questioning mind. Whereas, for very little kids… they really don't need to have them" (020A). Similarly, 029A said about Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes*, "I thought that they all are going to be just really fun, but… I just remember thinking at the time, "I don't think this is appropriate for a 7-year-old". Although 029A herself found *Revolting Rhymes* to be funny, she considered them to be scary and too sophisticated for the children in grade 2.

In some instances, the age limit was higher than 7- to 8-year-olds in Australia. Australian participants suggested traditional fairy tales and some war narratives should be read by older children. The presence of visible violence seemed to be a decisive criterion

here. 026A said, “There are some fairy tales that I don’t think I would use with really young students. … In a school library, we usually would not start talking about fairy tales until years 3 and 4. Just because there are some really complicated themes there, and the violence that is quite violent in many cases”. If the picturebook included explicit representations of violence in words, in images or both, participants reported they would not recommend these books to young children; however, the age limit differed depending on the participant. For example, looking at *The War that Change Rondo,* 029A said, “Maybe, 13+ to have a bit of an understanding of the concepts”. Whereas, 026A said about the same book, “Just looking at the pictures, at the illustrations, I’d, probably, do middle years or secondary and upper secondary, like young adults” (026A). Also, Australian participants agreed that the picturebook *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015) was not appropriate reading for primary school children. For example, 027A said, “You wouldn’t want that book to be dealt with in the primary years” (027A). Similarly, 023A said, “That’s for older children, that’s for adults… I wouldn’t think of using it with younger kids at all” (023A). Also, 031A said, “It's expressing what it was, you know, how it was for those young men, but that's pretty vivid language for a child to take in” (031A). In addition, the book was based on the adult song. 020A explained, “The whole book was anti- the Vietnam War… You can, certainly, read it in primary school, like grade 3 upwards, and lots of teachers would read it to 1s and 2s. Though, I, probably, wouldn’t” (020A). 020A made a valid point here: although none of the research participants said they would use *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015) in primary school, I saw the picturebook available in the general CL collection in the public library (see a photo in the Appendix) and in the library catalogues of some Tasmanian primary schools.

The age limit set by the Ukrainian participants also took into account levels of maturity and sensitivity. If the book was expected to be read by children on their own, the Ukrainian age limit resembled the Australian one; it was 7- or 8-years old. For example, the Ukrainian participants said about *Blossom Possum* (2006):

> I would not recommend it to very young children. Perhaps, this is for slightly older, like 7- or 8-year-olds, so that they can understand the situation adequately. (015U)

> This tale is for children, for primary and upper-primary schoolchildren. (016U)

> Just looking at the illustrations and the text… Well, I don't know, perhaps, for 7-year-olds or 8-year-olds. (017U)

018U explained that children who are 7 or older know how to read; she said, "They understand what they read. They read very different books, including books about monsters… However, they never say, "Oh, we are so worried!". No, they see it as an adventure" (018U).

However, when the Ukrainian participants were asked about fairy tales, the age limit would start from five or six [pre-school age]. The participants said that because traditional folktales, animal tales and other fantasy stories were expected to be read to a child by their parents, even very young children could read them. The participants said:

> Well, these are fairy tales. We read them in primary school, or even at the earlier age, at the pre-school age. (014U)

> Tales differ from each other… I think young children should read fairy tales, but of course with a correct interpretation [provided by adults]. (007U)

> Folktales are read to very young children by parents. (001U)

Consequently, it was believed that very young children could read fairy tales despite the presence of violence. Parents were seen as guardians and interpreters.

In Ukraine, 12 was generally thought to be the minimum age for reading picturebooks representing war or suicide and referring to historical events (e.g., *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015)*, Waltzing Matilda* (2007)*, Yaroslavna's Lament* (2016)). 011U said, "Readers of every age have their own literature". 014U said about *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015), "I think, starting from grade 6 or 7, they understand the topic of war. Whereas, in primary and upper-primary school, you would be too young to comprehend this" (014U). 010U believed the age limit for the same picturebook should be higher, at least 14 or 15. She said, "I think, if a child is 14 or 15 years

old, she or he can understand… This is for secondary school when the child can comprehend the topic. The younger children would be scared" (010U). In the case of *Waltzing Matilda* (2007), the participants mostly said that the book could be read from 12. 009U explained that to understand this book children should have a sound and well-developed moral judgement. She said they can read it "from 12 onwards because at that age children understand their consequences of their actions". Similarly, 014U said, "Colonisation… This is a difficult topic. This is for secondary school [12-to 18-year-olds]"; she explained that because the historical context of the story differed so much from the contemporary reality, it would be too difficult for younger children to understand the choices made by the swagman. 015U also said that *Waltzing Matilda* (2007) was a picturebook aimed at the secondary school students [12-18] who were able to comprehend the idea of the death penalty. She said, "I don't know. I think, very young readers will not understand this. It will be difficult. It will be scary. What is a *death penalty*? Why is he jumping into the billabong? Perhaps, for the middle-school age children [12-15]. I don't know" (015U). I suspected that the Ukrainian research participants might think that *Waltzing Matilda* (2007) should be recommended only to older children because the context was foreign and needed a lot of unpacking for a non-Australian child. However, when discussing the *Yaroslavna's Lament* (2016), a poem with a familiar historical and cultural background, the Ukrainian participants insisted that the text was for older children. 017U said, "Even in grade 9 or 10… Despite the fact that this poem is part of the curriculum and even at the age children learn it at school [15-16], it might be difficult for the children to understand it. You understand it years later. When they are 15-16, they just don't understand. They can read it… but… It passes by…". 016U explained that the poem explores complex emotions children cannot fully relate to. He said, "They do not understand the complexity of her feelings: she is afraid her husband has died, but she hopes he might come back" (016U). 015U also said that because children lacked experience, it was too difficult for them to understand. She said, "I remember how we read it in grade 7 or 8. We learned it by heart. We had to get a high grade. But only when I became an adult did I understand this poem. I understood that I had not understood it before" (015U).

These findings demonstrated how decisions about the age limit of picturebooks were influenced by the perceived mental abilities of children to understand the complexity of situations involving violence and emotional preparedness. Picturebooks representing

violence were often rated as books aimed at children who are older than 7. Some picturebooks that described complex situations (e.g., war), or included explicit descriptions, were rated as appropriate for children older than 12. Moreover, some participants suggested a higher age limit, namely, 13, 14 or 15. The major difference between Australian and Ukrainian responses was in estimating the age limit for fairy tales representing violence. Many Ukrainian participants believed that it was safe to read fairy tales in pre-school age because this type of narrative was read with parents. Australian participants often suggested significantly higher age limits (e.g., upper primary school) because they expected these stories to be discussed in a classroom with a teacher.

4.4.2. Readers' sensitivity

The terms *reader's sensitivities* and *sensitive children* appeared in both Australian and Ukrainian data. Participants from both countries agreed that some children can be scared or upset easier than others, and therefore, those *sensitive children* should not be recommended books representing violence, death or other controversial themes. They said:

> One child might find this obnoxious and another child might absolutely enjoy it. (025A)

> Some children will not be affected at all, but some children are far more sensitive, and it does make a difference. (020A)

> Perhaps, it depends on a child's sensitivity. Depending on the child's personality traits, each child will perceive this differently. (017U)

> I think, there are very delicate children who would react to this… sensitively. (019U)

Sensitivity was seen more as a continuum rather than a separate category of children. For example, 029A said, "You need to take into account different sensitivities within that group". Similarly, 031A explained, "We need to be aware that we have a range of sensitivities, and I don't think we should pool those who might react sensitively to this.

We need to show our own sensitivity to their sensitivity". The Ukrainian participants also gave examples of how children responded to books differently depending on their *sensitivity*:

> This was the only hated book, *Horrid Henry* (1994) by Francesca Simon [illustrated by Tony Ross]. It's a book about a mischievous boy who likes misbehaving. Some children read it with pleasure. But other children say, "I won't read this book! This is a bad story. I hate the boy. No one should behave like that". So, this was the only book like that. (017U)

> This is like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*… I recall how I read this as an adult just because I found it interesting. But some people come to us and say their children have cried reading it. What is the reason for that? Does it depend on the emotional state? Or on upbringing? We recommend *The Cabin of Uncle Sam* to some readers, and they like the story. But we also have readers who do not think that *Tom Sawyer* is funny. (018U)

The Australian participants often linked *sensitivity* to children's previous experience and traumas of the past. Consequently, *sensitive* children could include witnesses of domestic violence, children who knew others who committed suicide or who were refugees. Children who experienced significant traumas in their lives were the primary concern of the teachers and librarians. 025A looked at an illustration where a horse was kicking a wolf and explained that the majority of children would not relate to the story as to a plausible realistic narrative; she said, "For a few sensitive children it is [disturbing], but [for others] it's not part of their lives at all... They see it as a story. They see it as something we can discuss" (025A).

In addition to the victims of domestic violence, participants said that children who lost relatives due to suicide could be perceived as *sensitive*. 030A said that, before discussing a book representing suicide (e.g., *Waltzing Matilda* (2007)), "You need to be terribly aware of their [children's] background. You need to know if someone in their family has committed suicide". Overall, the teachers and librarians were concerned with certain cases more than with others. However, instead of simply categorising readers and

placing them into boxes, the participants perceived *sensitivity* as a continuum and would make judgements on a case-by-case basis.

Refugees and children who had lived in the warzone were mentioned too. Discussing picturebooks representing war, 022A said, "If you have refugees in your class and they had that experience... it could be very confronting, and it could bring the flashbacks of what's been happening in their life, so you'd need to be aware of that". Moreover, 028A recalled an example from her own teaching experience: she was reading *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015) to the class and one the girls with a refugee background became very upset by the imagery of picturebook. Later, it turned out her sibling died in an accident on a mine field. Therefore, memories of the traumatic event contributed to her sensitivity and to her perception of violence.

The Ukrainian participants mostly linked *sensitivity* to children's personality traits. Talking about *sensitive* or *delicate* readers, the Ukrainian participants often mentioned the term *psyche*. They believed very young children, who were more sensitive by nature, might be traumatised if they were exposed to fictional violence and if adults did not explain the purpose of a violent act. For example, 007U said, "There are children with a very sensitive psyche; their psychological portrait is very gentle and delicate" (007U). 001U explained this using an example of a *Tom and Jerry* cartoon. She said, "Perhaps, older children who have a foundation can watch this, as they have some immunity. But if a child is too young… and if it is not explained to the child [by adults] that [they must not harm others], […] then the child's psyche is damaged" (001U). Similarly, 009U said about *Not Now, Bernard* (1980), "I would not give this book to children because their psyche and their interpretation might be too sensitive to read this book. I don't know… In my opinion, this book is for parents only" (009U). Therefore, the Ukrainian participants thought that some young children might be very sensitive to fictional violence and should not be exposed to it if the adults were not able to explain the topic to them.

The Ukrainian participants suggested that many children would not be affected by picturebooks representing violence; however, some *sensitive* children might have difficulties with interpreting fictional violence. For example, 015U said that *Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* (2015) "is suitable for children at the grade 3 [9-year-olds]. But it is necessary to look at the child. Not every child will be able to digest this. Well, every child might interpret this situation differently" (015U). Similarly, 009U explained that "one child

might be cool with this [open ending in *the Great Bear* (2010)] and another may be encouraged to… to commit suicide or anything else… It's all about interpretation" (009U). 019U said about *Blossom Possum* (2006), "I think it should be fine for grade 1 students [7-year-olds]. But, of course, there are some very sensitive children who would react to this" (019U). Child's individual sensitivity, therefore, was seen as an important criterion in deciding whether a picturebook should be recommended to and read to all children, or to some children. In conclusion, the participants of the study prioritised the child-centred dimension when judging the appropriateness of a given book and considered children's *sensitivity* when selecting books.

4.4.3. Scared readers

Fear was among the top emotions taken into account by gatekeepers when deciding a picturebook's appropriateness. Often, after being asked whether a picturebook should be recommended to children (and if yes, what age), participants would start thinking aloud about whether a child would be scared by a scene in the book. Although I never asked, "Would children be frightened?", this was a natural, intuitive way of judging picturebooks representing violence. For example, looking at the scene from "Sirko" (2015), 031A said, "The wolf doesn't look threatening" (031A), and then she asked herself, "Would they [a child] fear being abducted by a wolf? I'm thinking of a certain age… I don't know…" (031A). This showed that the decision-making process started from imagining a potential child-reader and measuring the risk of the child becoming frightened. Another example of this was a brief excerpt of conversation with 029A during the discussion of the Ukrainian folktale "Kyrylo Kozhumiaka" (2013):

> H: And [after killing a dragon] the man returns to his home village, and lives a simple life. And after he dies, his countrymen put a big stone on the riverbank to commemorate his great deed.
> 029A: Right, I see. And do I find it scary? No, I don't find this scary.
> H: No. I mean, should we discuss it with children?

Both examples showed that semantically my questions, “Would you recommend the book to children?” and “Would you discuss the book with children?” were often understood as synonymous to “Do you find this book scary? Are children going to be scared?”. Consequently, it could be concluded that one of the reasons adults were unwilling to recommend or discuss certain picturebooks representing violence was that they believed these books might frighten children.

The belief that children could be scared of a violent scene in a book often derived from their professional experience. This belief was shared by both Australian and Ukrainian participants. 020A remembered how she was reading a story about a goose girl to young children when she just commenced her career. Because she had never read this book before, she did not expect that the horse was going to be beheaded. Moreover, the horse’s head was put on the gate and this was depicted on the illustration. She recalled the situation:

> 020A: I got to the last page and there was that and I got caught up badly because I was reading it to the young class.
> H: What did you do? Did you change the ending?
> 020A: Well, it was a picturebook, and I was showing them pictures. And I sort of turned the page, and the kids, all, saw the picture.
> H: Oh! Was that on the picture? Was it depicted? His head?
> 020A: Mmm… [nodding] I’m trying to remember because it was many-many years ago… the kids were horrified.

The effect on the children was clear here: they were *horrified*. However, even more clearly the story emphasised that the responsibility of dealing with situation (horrified children) was on an adult guardian. Not surprisingly, the research participants were preoccupied with scary stories. For example, 028A (a librarian who had started her career not long time ago) focused on scary elements in several books. She pointed at the illustration from *Cat on the Island* (2008) and commented on the cat’s face covered with bird’s blood, “That is a scary little cat!” (028A), she said about the scene in the *Blossom Possum* (2006), “Oh, they look scary! Are they fighting?” (028A), she said about “Kyrylo Kozhumiaka” (2013), “The dragon has big teeth, and big claws, and looks very scary” (028A)

and she expressed her opinion about “Ivasyk-Telesyk”, “The snake looks scary, and gory” (028A). Therefore, a scale of *scariness* was often considered when judging picturebooks.

The process of measuring *scariness* was not straightforward. The participants often emphasised that characters and objects they themselves saw as innocent might have been perceived as scary by children. 023A explained that when her son was 5, they were reading a picturebook depicting a mouldy sausage. “He was terribly frightened… this just really surprised me”, 023A recalled. The little boy said the mouldy sausage reminded him of the soldiers wearing camouflage he saw on TV, and he found them scary. 029A expressed a very similar idea, saying, “It’s only when you start reading to children and get their reaction; perhaps, you realise something might be a bit disturbing. Because as an adult you don’t really worry about scary stuff” (029A). Therefore, one challenge in measuring fear mentioned by the Australian participants was that adults and children had different opinions on the matter.

The other challenge was that various adults often disagreed on what should be labelled as *scary*. The differences could be noticed even within cultures. For instance, the majority of Australian participants concluded that *The Great Bear* (2010) by Armin Greder looked frightening; however, all the other picturebooks evoked a great range of responses from *not frightening at all* to *very frightening*. For example, some Australian participants found *Hansel and Gretel* to be “a very scary story” (024A). Others called it *quite scary*. 029A said that “those old Grimm’s brother’s fairy tales, we talked about earlier, you know, when children were popped into ovens… Terrifying things! Yes, so I think, that might be quite scary” (029A). However, 022A disagreed, saying, “I can’t remember the situation where a child was actually being scared of a story of *Hansel and Gretel*”. Similarly, 025A said that folktales like *Hansel and Gretel* would not scare young children. She commented on the Ukrainian tale “Ivasyk-Telesyk” (2013), “When they are 13, it might come back to haunt them [laughing], but it wouldn't go with them at 4 or 5 or 6 or 7… it's actually very similar to pushing the witch to save *Hansel and Gretel*” (025A). Whereas, 031A looked at the illustration to the same Ukrainian tale and said, “Some of these images could be, for some children, quite scary”. Consequently, it was said that more sensitive children might find illustrated folktales scary, whereas other would not. Therefore, the participants with similar cultural backgrounds were likely measure the *scariness* of folktales differently.

The comparison of Australian and Ukrainian responses presented even greater difference in what was considered by adults as *too scary* for children. This might be linked to taboos shaped by history and culture that were unique for each country. The most prominent representation of violence that acted as taboo for Ukrainian participants was any mentioning of eating children. When I asked the Ukrainian participants to think about some examples of picturebooks representing violence, two of them told me that the scariest tale they had ever read was *Wolf and Seven Kids.* Although they referred to different versions of the same fairy tale, the shared feature was that a wolf ate seven little goat kids. One participant said:

> 011U: As for me, the only scary tale is one about a goat and seven kids.
>
> H: Why?
>
> 011U: The moment when the wolf's belly is cut, the kids are taken out and the stones are placed into the wolf's belly [is scary]… Then the wolf walks toward a well and because all the stones in his belly he drowns… This is the scariest Ukrainian folktale…

Another participant recalled:

> 012U: I am still extremely terrified when I think of the Belarusian version of *Wolf and Seven Kids*.
> H: Was it with a wolf with the stones in his belly?
> 012U: Not really… No, this is a different one. A wolf ate all the kids. Their mother came home, saw it and cried for a while. Then she ground their bones into a flour, made cookies and joined the wolf at their funeral.

The other *very scary* story according to the Ukrainian gatekeepers was *Not Now, Bernard* (1980), where "a monster ate Bernard up, each and every bit of him" (McKee, 2005, no page). The act of eating a boy was seen by many Ukrainian participants as *horrifying* and extremely violent. They said:

It's a terrible book! … You know, I would not recommend this book to children, honestly. This is an extreme form of violence! When the monster eats… No… This is a book of horrors! (017U)

What did the author mean? What is the moral of the story? Children must have it explained to them [by adults]. Because if a child read this on their own, it becomes spooky. (011U)

006U: … the illustrations could be changed.
H: What would you change in these illustrations?
006U: The monster is rather scary. I don't know… Someone could be afraid of this monster.

Well, this monster is not scary. But the fact that he ate Bernard is horrible … It's like we scare children with Babay[6]. Although, I never scared my children with Babay. My parents never scared me. So, I am not sure how it works [laughing]" (001U).

005U had a slightly different response to *Not Now, Bernard* (1980) than other Ukrainian participants. She compared the picturebook with the popular animation *Monsters, Inc*. (2001), referring to the high level of fictionality of both narratives. At the same time, while acknowledging that the story was scary and that children would be scared by it, she thought they would also be delighted by it. "It's a well-known fact that children will be scared – and they will love it. There is a whole philosophy behind this" (005U), she said. Overall, the Ukrainian participants believed children would be scared of *Not Now, Bernard.*

Although the Australian participants were not familiar with *Wolf and Seven Kids*, they reacted differently than the Ukrainian participants to a scene where a boy was eaten by a monster in *Not Now, Bernard*. While the Ukrainian gatekeepers were horrified and

[6] Some Ukrainian parents tell their children that if they keep misbehaving, Babay, a scary magical creature will come and take them away.

disgusted with *Not Now, Bernard,* the Australian participants thought the picturebook was funny. For example, they said:

> It's tongue in cheek, and that's a laugh at parents, and kids love it. And that's fine. Violent? These illustrations … convey humour, not scariness … If I was reading it, I probably wouldn't read it to kinders and preps, but I'd certainly read it to grade 1 upwards. Yes, because they laugh uproariously, they thought the thing was hilarious. Especially, when I say: "Not now", they would say: "Bernard! Bernard!". (020A)

> [laughing] I mean, I see where there is violence with that, but I think it is being used as a pretty simple tool of illustrating the point [laughing] … But it is more about humour, even if it is depicting something violent. (026A)

> I think it has that touch of humour in it. So, the story which you are trying to give to kids is made stronger, and it is made palatable. (027A)

> But if I would be reading this with a young person, like my grandson, I'd be getting them to laugh first of all at the monster, and at the fact that the monster doesn't exist, and this is, actually, just being written by the author. (030A)

One exception to perceiving *Not Now, Bernard* as funny was expressed by 029A who explained that very young children might not realise this story is fictional, and therefore, might be scared. She said, "There is a certain stage when little children are growing up, that they are terrified of monsters, and if they learn that monsters have the capacity to eat you, well I think that's particularly scary and disturbing" (029A).

Another difference between the two cultures lay in judgements of *scary* stories. Australian participants often wanted to avoid evoking fear in children and disliked the idea of reading a picturebook to children if the picturebook was perceived as scary. For example, 029A said, "Sometimes, I suppose, something that worried me [was] that things might have been a little bit scary, and I don't like scaring children". Ukrainian participants, however, believed that some children enjoyed being scared by a fictional story and therefore they thought that *scary* books should be offered to children. They said:

> Some children ask for detective stories. Others also ask for scary stories, for scary stories with humour in them. (007U)

> Nowadays, children of all ages like scary stories. There is a culture of telling each other scary stories. It's still there. Like, there is this story about a granny who killed someone with an axe, made dumplings out of them and fed those dumplings to others. This is scary and violent. … Also, on a subconscious level, such a story is psychotherapeutic. On one hand, the story is horrible. On the other hand, it reveals social dangers. Some of these themes are irrelevant today. But the tales about dangerous strangers who end up being Bluebeards are very useful nowadays. (008U)

> If we look at children's creative writing or at their games, we will find a lot of violence there. It's not that they are fighting, but they play "zombie attacks" or something like that. Also, I have been teaching creative writing to children, and they often write [about violence]. Once they even wrote about sausages made of unicorns [laughing]. (019U)

One participant referred to her own childhood experience to explain how children might want to read scary stories. She said:

> Back then, I remember my grandpa was telling us a tale we loved… it was one of those oral folktales… We loved when our grandpa would get to the [scary] moment and say, "O-o-o-o… In the attic…" At this moment, we would become frightened; but we would always ask him to tell us this story. (001U)

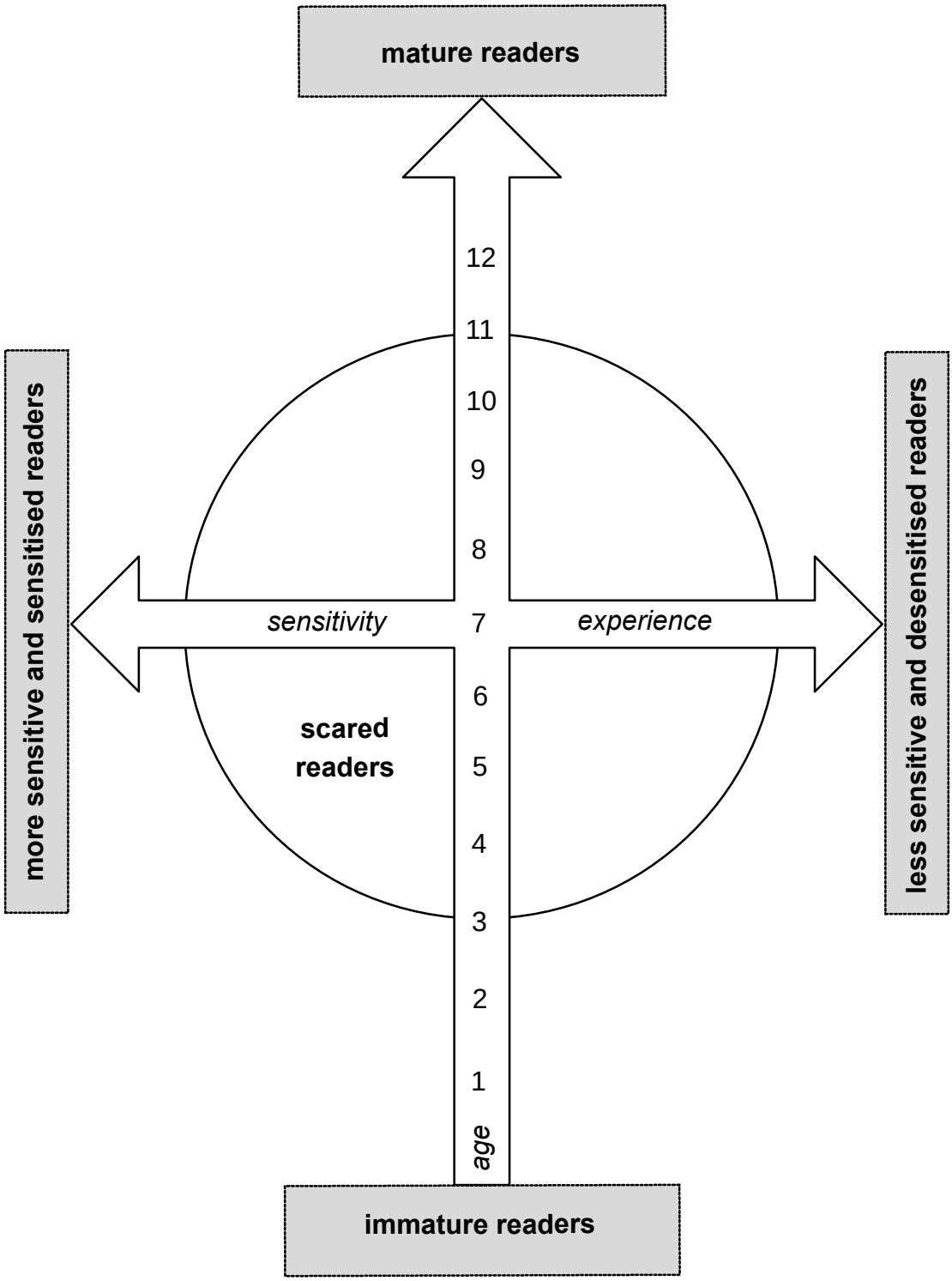
At the same time, some Ukrainian participants explained that not all children wanted to read scary stories and this should be acknowledged. For instance, one of them said, "Recently, one reader [age 10] came to me and said they wanted to read a book with adventures, but something that is not scary" (007U). Similar, 018U made an assumption

about children based on her experience of working with readers in the library; she said, “Children are kind; they like something nice and light. If something is scary, it should be just a little bit scary. If it is just one episode, that is fine. But if the entire book is like that then children become frightened” (018U). Therefore, she assumed that children were kind and innocent and could not cope with very scary stories.

Some young readers were perceived by the research participants as easily frightened; the projection of *scared readers* was established. This construct was based both on the professional experience of working with children and the belief that children were innocent and should be protected from negative emotions. There were two major distinctions in the Australian and Ukrainian responses. First, the theme of monsters eating children was perceived by Ukrainian participants as taboo and therefore very scary, but as humorous and funny by Australian participants. Second, if a book was perceived as potentially *scary*, Ukrainian participants were more likely to offer it to children than their Australian colleagues because Ukrainian participants believed children enjoyed being scared, and that reading scary books was safe for most children.

Figure 4

Scared Readers



4.4.4. Naïve readers

Not all children were seen as potentially scared when reading picturebooks representing violence. Children who lacked knowledge and had no exposure to violence were perceived as less sensitive and less likely to be scared than other children. The construct of a *naïve reader* appeared in many interviews: participants claimed that children would not see the discussed scene as being violent. To notice the violence, the person must have been aware of what violence was and how it could be manifested. Often, children would be blissfully ignorant about the presence of violence in books simply because they did not have well-developed critical thinking skills to analyse the situation and realise it was actually violent. Using the words of 022A, "The other thing with violence is young children don't get it. They don't see it". Elaborating on this idea, 022A mentioned, "Reading on their own, they don't get it. Like, they need someone to interpret it for them, to look at it in different ways" (022A). Also, 023A said, "Most children wouldn't see it, they wouldn't get that meaning". 017U concluded, "The child who is listening to a tale will not focus on violence. Well, perhaps, some children will notice. There are children with a predisposition to violence… But other children will not even pay attention to violence here" (017U).

The naivety of young readers manifested itself in child readers not reacting to the tales adults perceived as very scary. 004U explained, "Children and adults perceive folktales differently. As an adult you ponder about the tale and become terrified, but as a child, you react calmly" (004U). The proof of this idea could be seen in the reaction of adult to the picturebook *Not Now, Bernard* described above. While Ukrainian participants, who had never seen this book before, were terrified by the story, Australian participants who previously read this picturebook to children explained, "You can read it to the young children, they wouldn't understand the horror of this, they would just see it as something funny" (027A).

The participants would often say that since the majority of children did not have exposure to violence in real life, they would not recognise fictional violence in picturebooks. 022A explained, "As a child you only see what means something to you. You don't have that worldly concept of what it means to be violent". In addition, 020A offered a detailed explanation of why children would not see violence, saying, "Children are bringing to their reading experiences what they already know. So, if you've experienced tragedy like suicide

or death, you are more likely to pick up the nuances of the story, the text and the illustrations than if you haven't" (020A). Looking at the fight scene in the *Possum Blossom* (2006), 017U said, "There is violence here. But I don't think children will be shocked that someone stepped on someone's foot [or tail]…" (017U).

Suicide was among the top examples of violence that would not be recognised by children according to the Australian research participants. Discussing *The Great Bear* (2010) and *Waltzing Matilda* (2007), the Australian participants would often refer to their experiences reading the books to children to explain that violence here was unnoticed by young readers. 020A said about *The Great Bear* (2010), "Most kids [pause] wouldn't really understand that it was a suicide. They would just see it as a release. They wouldn't actually think about it as suicide". She had a similar opinion about the *Waltzing Matilda* (2007), as she said, "They sing the words, and they don't really realise that the guy jumped into the billabong to drown himself, nor that he died, and that he deliberately had taken his own life. And I think this book [*The Great Bear* (2010)] is much the same as that" (020A). Similarly, 022A looked at the *Waltzing Matilda* (2007) and said, "You are right, there is a suicide in there [pause]. So, would a child, would early childhood people read them? Some of them, like prep or kindergarden, would they pick up the fact that this is suicide? I don't think so". Here, the participants were convinced that a child had to already know a concept in order to notice it in a story; and as long as such a concept was absent from the young mind, it was safe to read the book to a child.

War was another topic mentioned by the participants in relation to children's blissful ignorance. Looking at the picturebooks representing war, Australian participant 025A said, "It might have more meaning for older children, who as I've said really realise what war is. But for the younger (from four to eight), no, I think they would do that with any anxiety at all", meaning that it was safe to read the books to young children. Ukrainian participants held very similar views about the interpretation of war by very young children. One of them said, "I think, starting from grade 6 or 7, children understand the theme of war. If we look at the primary school, I think they are just too young to comprehend the idea" (014U). Similarly, 017U said, "I don't think a very young child understands the word "war" or has any associations with it…" (017U). Furthermore, Australian participant 029A and Ukrainian participant 002U had almost identical views on the matter when shown *Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* (2015):

> I don't think the child would understand what is depicted… I don't think shadows would mean anything to a child. My generation, perhaps, with the knowledge of the war… We know exactly what the shadows [of soldiers] mean and what the shadows depict: the soldiers and the bayonets. But to a child that, probably, wouldn't be so scary. (029A)

> If a child saw this image, I do not know if he or she would understand what's happening here. She or he would see the walking soldiers and a boy with his bicycle. But I don't think a child would see violence in this image. Adults would get it straight away. (002U)

Furthermore, it appeared that the term *naïve* readers could be applied to children of a pre-school age who were younger than six. 018U shared her experience of observing primary school children drawing war. She explained that, perhaps, up until children reached school age, they would not understand an idea of war; however, after six, children were not that *naïve* anymore. She said:

> Children draw war this way. For example, they wrote, "Kick Putin's ass". I took photos of these pictures. Children in grade 1 [6-7-year-olds] drew German planes; the Ukrainian planes were shooting at them 7 – "Bah! Bah!" – with lots of smoke and darkness. It looked horrifying. But this is how they drew it. This is how children understand war. They understand that this is the enemy. I think they understand that this is violence. They understand that the war is going on. On one image, the man was depicted in blue and yellow [colours of Ukrainian flag]; his leg was injured, the blood was dripping. This is how children depict war. They are not frightened by those images. This is their interpretation of war. I have many images like that. I took photographs of them (018U).

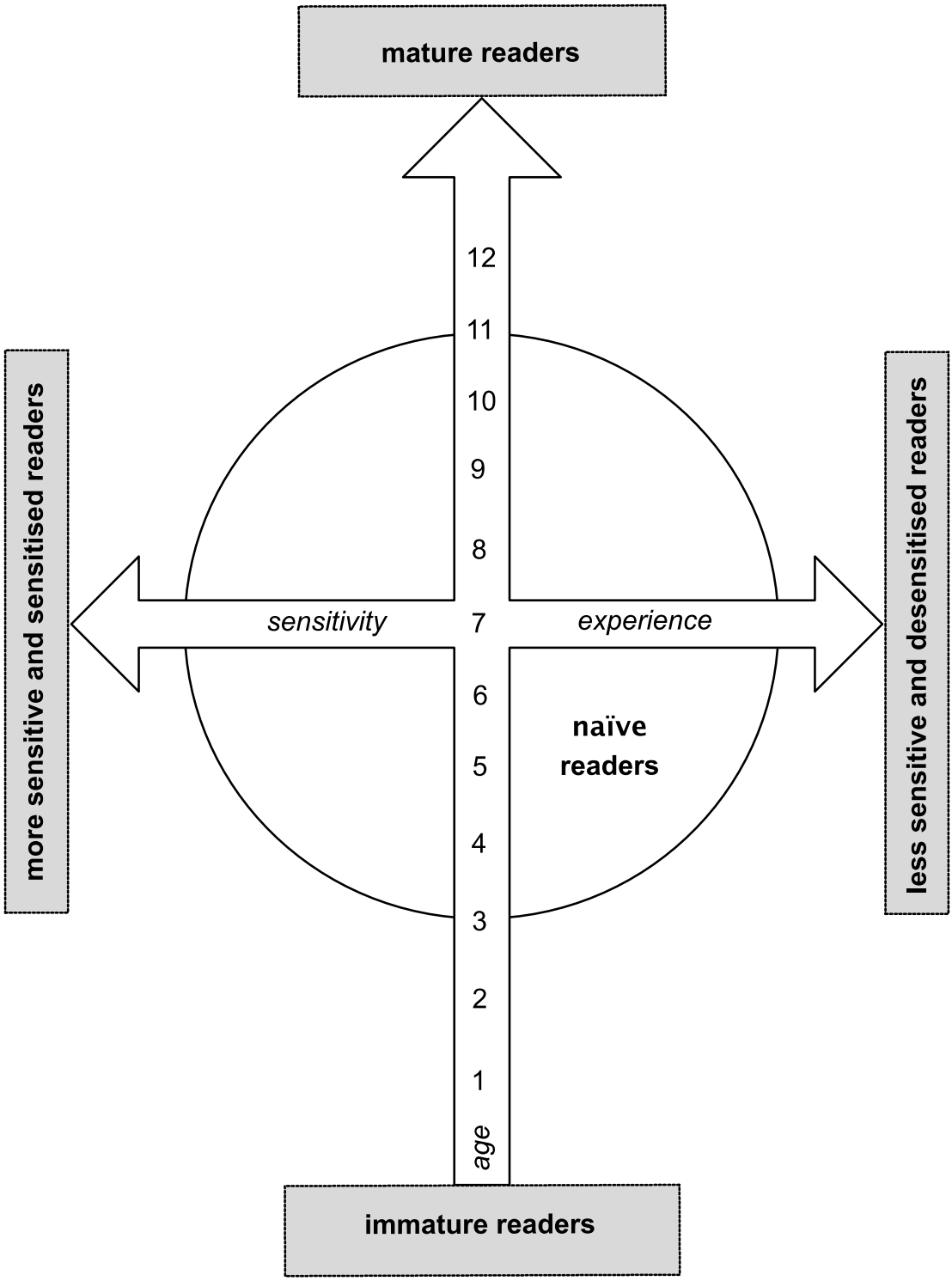
[7] Due to the Second World War narratives present in media or in films (e.g., *Wonder Woman*), some children might perceive Germans as "the enemy".

In this example, it was clear that children were not afraid of exploring the theme of war. They understood the idea of war their own way. They might not understand the complexity of war or fully realise the consequences of war for an entire society; they might have anachronistically inherited the image of the German as the enemy from Soviet times; however, they seemed to be ready to transition from *naïve* to *accomplished* readers.

Consequently, very young children who did not have much knowledge and had not been exposed to violence were sometimes perceived as *naïve* readers. It was said the naïve readers would not be frightened by fictional monsters. Also, it was believed war or suicide were too complex and abstract ideas for young children to understand; therefore, young children would not be able to notice them or to respond to them with fear.

Figure 5

Naïve Readers



4.4.5. Troubled readers

Anxiety was another emotional state considered by the gatekeepers. As a result, predicting a child's emotional response often was an important element of the decision-making process for selecting or recommending books. For example, 025A drew on her experience of working with young children to anticipate what might worry them. Fantasy books were dismissed straight away; it was believed they would not cause much anxiety or sadness. 025A said about the Ukrainian folktale "Ivasyk-Telesyk" (2013), "I think the tragedy would be that this little boy was there at the first place. But the story itself, once he got there, I don't think would cause them grief" (025A), meaning that children might empathise with the main character while he was in danger of being eaten; however, once the conflict was resolved, the emotional tension would dissipate. Realistic books (either drawing style, or text, or both) were seen as less *safe* in comparison to fictional ones. "I wouldn't share it with the younger ones", 025A said about *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015). "They would be stressed by that line of dads and granddads going up the hill. And they also would be stressed by this", 025A explained, pointing at the text of the poem, "We were butchered as lambs at the slaughter" (Bogle & Whatley, 2015 [1971], p. 9). Finally, according to 025A, children would be most anxious and worried if the story was realistic and children could easily relate to it. She gave an example of a story about a trapped little bird young readers could identify with:

> It worries them more, perhaps, when… There was a little robin in one story that was caught up. And that worried them more… this little bird, little red robin… And this ghastly war was there all the time, but they had more feeling for the robin than for all that went on in the war because they could relate to that. They could relate to that one little bird in this. But the field of war was too much for them to even, I don't know, to picture it in their own mind, to make a picture of that. It was very difficult. But they could picture a bird stuck in there, and hope that it got out and worried that it wouldn't get out. (025A)

There was a similar tendency for predicting a child's response to *Not Now, Bernard* (1980). As mentioned before, the majority of Australian participants thought the book was

funny because it was fictional and full of humour. However, some disagreed. 030A commented on the book, saying, “I would be afraid that the message to a child would be, “You can’t trust your mother and father, and they are not even going to notice… [if you disappear]”. That’s a very disturbing message. And that’s what I would call “psychologically violent” … I don’t think it’s funny. I think, it really could be quite disturbing” (030A). Because 030A saw the main message of the story (parents ignoring their child) as relatable and realistic, she was concerned that children would identify with Bernard and would become anxious. Therefore, the level of fictionality and relatability to the story were among commonly used criteria for predicting if the book may cause anxiety.

In addition to anxiety-provoking narratives, picturebooks deemed disturbing included unpleasant and disgusting stories. One prominent example from the Australian data was provided by 028A. She mentioned a picturebook dealing with self-harm in which a boy ate himself[8]. The process of devouring one’s body was explicitly described in words and depicted in images. Even though, at the end of the book, the act of self-harm turned out to be just a dream and the book had an educational message (children should eat more vegetables), the participant found the book appalling and *disgusting*. Describing the book to me and explaining her reasons for not liking it, 028A said:

> It talks about *swallowing*, and *chewing*, and *chomping*, and *nibbling*, and *swallowing*… And, it’s just… made me feel sick because he is eating himself. And, after reading it, I felt… I don’t know if I want to read it again or I don’t know if the child really wants to read that. And, what a silly way to get the message across! (028A)

The example clearly demonstrated that the starting point of judging the picturebook was the participant’s emotional response to the book (she felt disgust). Then, the next stage was the anticipation that the child would feel the same way and would not want to read the book. Finally, it was concluded that that despite the educational message the picturebook was not appropriate due to its content.

[8] The book *The Boy Who Ate Himself* (2012) was not discussed with other research participants. More research is necessary to see a clearer connection between the violence and disgust in picturebooks.

The Ukrainian data revealed other aspects of *troubled* readers. While Australian participants predicted if a book may cause anxiety to children, Ukrainian participants recalled several cases of children being upset by stories and crying. The first cause of child's sadness was individual sensitivity. 019U recalled how she was reading a tale *Black Cockroach* to 8-year-old children. She said:

> The plot was the following: a man entered a cave and expelled a black cockroach who has lived there. One boy who was really sensitive about nature issues said that this was very unfair. He said, "I don't like this tale. I am very sad because this was cockroach's home… (019U)

Another example of a *troubled* reader caused by sensitivity to emotional violence was given by 018U. She reported that a boy refused to read a book called *Horrid Henry* because the words on the first pages were saying that Henry was such a horrible child that even his own mother did not love him. She said:

> My colleagues recommended this book to one boy. He started reading it; but then he stopped and cried. He was 6 years old. He said, "I don't want to read this book" … This was his response. We observed him. He threw the book away and said "I don't want to read this book. I won't read it". (018U)

This case showed that Ukrainian gatekeepers were willing to give access to various books to children, and that the children had agency read or reject the book. Because Ukrainian librarians generally dedicated substantial time to communicating with readers, they could recommend books and observe and manage reader responses.

Referring to texts written for children a long time ago, some research participants noted that cultural changes had altered the way in which children responded to particular themes. Both the Australian and the Ukrainian data recorded instances of sadness and anxiety experienced by children after encounters with controversial topics such as death and the cruel treatment of animals, where earlier generations might have reacted differently. 027A shared an example of such a cultural shift that took place while she was teaching English at high school in Australia. She used to teach a poem describing life on a

farm (e.g., “Up in the early morning, pumping water and filling the milk cans, which were metal milk cans…” 027A). In addition to describing everyday routines, the poem also mentioned drowned kittens as an element of farm life in the 20th century. 027A explained:

> I mean, nowadays, today, we know about all the other things you could do. But this was back before that. This was part of what the world was like. It’s developed from there. So, they [children] needed to know that, but it got to [the stage] when they had no understanding of it, and it caused anxiety to the one beautiful… I can see this girl sitting in the class. She was a wonderful kid, and she did not want to be upsetting me. But I was upsetting her… There were a few things like that and I thought: “I cannot use this poem anymore”. (027A)

This example shows how the response to the poem had changed. Previously, readers would see kittens as a part of an everyday scene; the narrative would be very sad, yet predictable. However, with the cultural shift, the story was perceived from a new perspective. Readers could no longer relate to it; now, young readers would be more likely to perceive kittens as characters, to identify and empathise with them. Another valuable point brought up by this example was the complexity required to understand readers’ emotional responses: participants would predict the child’s emotional response to the story relying on their own emotional reaction; however, with the cultural shift, the adult guardians could no longer trust their predictions and had to develop new strategies for choosing and discussing texts representing violence.

In addition, a couple of Ukrainian examples involved children having anxious responses to death and cruel treatment of humans and animals in realistic stories written more than 50 years ago. One example was a reader’s response to a short story: *Fate of a Man* by Mikhail Sholokhov, written in 1956:

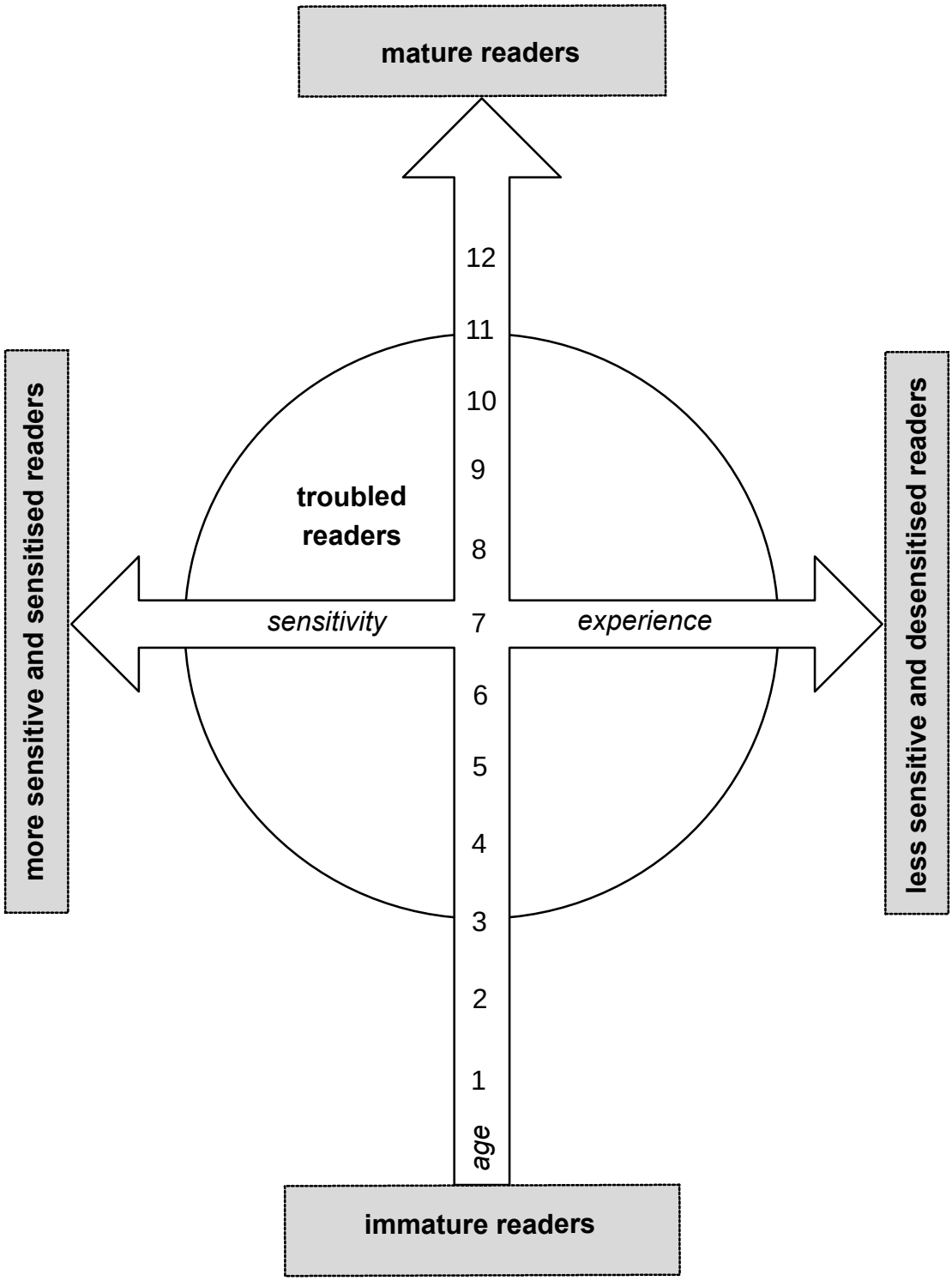
> Recently, a girl came to our library and said, “I was reading *Fate of a Man* by Mikhail Sholokhov and I was crying… I was weeping! I had to read it because the teacher demanded that we do. But I did not want to read it. How can anyone read something as sad as this story? (008U).

Also, 008U recalled another case of a crying child who read *White Bim Black Ear* (1971) by Gavril Troyepolsky. She said, “A child came to our library and said, “I hate this book. I will not finish reading it. I was crying… Never in my life have I cried so badly. Writers must not write like that. Full stop” (008U). Not only did these examples show that children were upset by similar types of stories, but also that children perceived librarians as trusted guardians with whom they could share their impressions and emotions. The child’s agency could also be observed here. In the first case, the child felt an external pressure (her teacher *forced* her to read the story) and she submitted to the authority. In the second case, the child also had to read the story, since *White Bim Black Ear* was part of the curriculum. However, the child decided to ignore the authority and not to read the book.

Finally, the data revealed that the Ukrainian gatekeepers had different opinions about recommending *sad* stories to children or not based on the image of an implied child reader. 017U suggested that sad stories should probably not be recommended to all children because this was not a type of reading children enjoyed. She said, “Frankly speaking, children do not like sad stories. They enjoy reading cheerful books. They often come to us and ask, “Can you give us something fun and cool?” (017U). However, 010U explained that children did not mind *sad* stories; they hated *boring* stories. She said that if the ending was sad and tragic, “children feel compassion; however, I can’t remember anyone saying, “The book was boring because the ending was sad”. The child will just say he or she was not interested in the book. So, children would read the first 10 pages, bring the book back and say, “I will not read it because it was boring”” (010U). It was believed that librarians should recommend that children read various types of stories because had enough agency to decide if they wanted to continue reading the recommended book or not.

Figure 6

Troubled Readers



4.4.6. Accomplished readers

Accomplished young readers were seen as children who were mature enough to read picturebooks depicting complex, nuanced and sophisticated topics, and who were able to manage their sensitivity to fictional violence. Scared, naïve and troubled readers could transform into *accomplished readers* with increased age, experience, mental and emotional intelligence and resilience. The role of adults in this transformation was perceived slightly differently by Australian and Ukrainian participants. The Australian participants mostly believed children needed their protection and guardianship up until they stopped being frightened, troubled or upset by disturbing topics in picturebooks. The Ukrainian participants had polarised views about young readers' protection. The majority believed that even if children found certain topics uncomfortable, they still had to read the stories because these stories reflected reality. They believed that children had to learn about *the harsh truth* and become more resilient, wise and emotionally intelligent.

Most Australian participants believed children should be protected from any uncomfortable truth displayed in picturebooks. They used the argument that the merit of telling the truth about *real life* was not worth the risk of upsetting children. "I don't think it's bad to shelter them [young children]" 031A said. Her argument was: "Let's protect them for a while, and then when they are exposed to it [violence in books], hopefully, they are going have a little bit more mature sensitivity to it" (031A). 020A used a similar argument, saying, "I think I, probably, have a slightly protective response to the really young. I think… even though some young children do suffer from depression, I don't know if that needs to be put out there for general reading" (020A), meaning that very young children should not be exposed to some controversial topics, including self-directed violence (e.g., depression). Therefore, there was an assumption that up until a certain age, all children were *sensitive* and should be *protected*. Furthermore, some Australian participants admitted there was a fine line between *protection* and *restriction*; however, they still insisted that books which might upset children should not be recommended to them. One Australian participant said:

> You listen to the kids. You care for them. You love them. They matter. … If they're sensitive, then those are the kids you have to be more careful with because you

don't want to be offending them… harming them… or adding to their insecurity or their sadness. (027A)

However, several Australian participants believed that after children had reached a certain level of maturity and sensitivity, and became *accomplished* readers, adults should not *overprotect* them from disturbing topics. They said children had to learn what *real life* was and that violence existed. They claimed that picturebooks could be a great tool for the purpose. 023A said, "You need that to show children what real life is like… Although some topics may not be the things I would want children to know about... Sometimes they need to know about them". 026A, an Australian participant with an American background, mentioned, "There are topics that are hard to discuss, and it is hard to start that conversation. Especially, with small children, but I think in the world that we live in that is... we need to be having these conversations when appropriate. Especially if we are doing it in schools and libraries" (026A). Also, she explained children would benefit from discussing difficult topics in a safe and supportive environment; she said: "We have to be having these conversations with children because they are going to be exposed to it at certain point, and … if we want to be a part of that conversation with them, I think we have to be the ones who start it" (026A). Similarly, 025A said about *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015), "I would read that to the eight to fourteen-year-olds … they would be distressed … They have to have it. I'm sorry, this is life. Yes. This is life and it does happen. So … that sort of literature needs to be shared" (025A). Therefore, the Australian participants were willing to discuss picturebooks representing violence with accomplished readers. Sensitive and immature readers were expected to be protected.

Ukrainian participants expressed a range of opinions on the topic of protection too. The majority believed that naïve and accomplished readers should read the book and know the truth even if it was upsetting. Excessive protection was perceived as restriction. For example, one Ukrainian participant said, "I believe, we should not impose limitations on children, and to show them only nice and good things… because then a child grows up and faces different types of violence, and becomes helpless" (017U). Furthermore, the Ukrainian participants said the *truth* should be represented realistically to the accomplished readers. For instance, 019U said, "Many children become victims of bullying. I think that… I think if we portray this [bullying] realistically and write explicitly about it, we should not just skip

uncomfortable moments. Because if we discuss this issue, we should discuss it properly. Otherwise, what is the point?" (019U). Bullying was not the only type of violence recognised to be as worth discussing by Ukrainian participants. Another topic seen as important to talk about even if it was upsetting was the cruel treatment of animals in circuses. It was said that:

> I think we should show this picturebook [*The Great Bear* (2010)] to children. They have to read it because they visit circus without knowing the reality. How is the bear dancing? How is he walking on a tightrope? How is he ride a bicycle? Children must know that a bear is forced to do this. This is why this tale is for children of any age. (002U)
>
> I must admit that I would, probably, recommend this [*The Great Bear* (2010)] picturebook to children. Because children have to know. They should learn to choose the circus without animals. (004U)

The Ukrainian participants believed that books with *upsetting* and *frightening* word passages and images should be read to children and then discussed with them. One reason was the thought that *upsetting* scenes reflect reality, and children have to eventually become *accomplished* readers and learn the *harsh truth of life*. It was said that:

> This illustration [in *The War that Changed Rondo*] is very upsetting, frightening and aggressive. But, I have read this book and I can tell that other illustrations are cheerful and positive. It is a necessary reading. I am sure that this is our social life nowadays. We have nowhere to escape from it. It is great that this book aimed at young readers exits. (003U)
>
> I don't think we should not prevent children from learning about uncomfortable truth and about the current issues. Because if we teach them to be blind and to see everything through pink glasses, they will not perceive reality adequately. After their parents stop protecting them (perhaps, in a teenage age), they will see the world in a new light. Because they will find more profound ways to explore reality. We will not

be able to control them all the time. If they want to do something, they will find their way around to trick you. I don't think we should stop reading these stories. (014U)

According to the Ukrainian gatekeepers, the other reason why children should read books with challenging topics was that these books were supposed to improve children's emotional intelligence. The following dialogue is one example:

> H: What if children get upset?... I mean, will the moral of the story be upsetting to them?
> 011U: Yes, it will be. But children cannot just have fun all the time. They have to experience different feelings… If their happiness is not compared to sadness, everything will be the same. A child should understand that the boy [Bernard] was sad because no one paid attention to him and that he was eaten by monster, and that monster was ignored too… They have to understand that one should not behave like his parents did, not with children, nor with adults.

Another example was offered by 001U who said, "There are many [parents] who do not realise that feelings should be trained … Also, the parents underestimate the power of books in such training. The book can teach children; however, at first children have to be taught to like reading when they are little" (001U). Therefore, she implied that picturebooks depicting violence might improve emotional intelligence.

Some participants also said that stories and picturebooks with controversial topics can teach accomplished readers empathy and compassion. The most vivid example was given by a Ukrainian literature teacher who recalled how he used a short novel, *At Korsun* (1919) by Adrian Kashchenko, to work with such themes as empathy and compassion. He said:

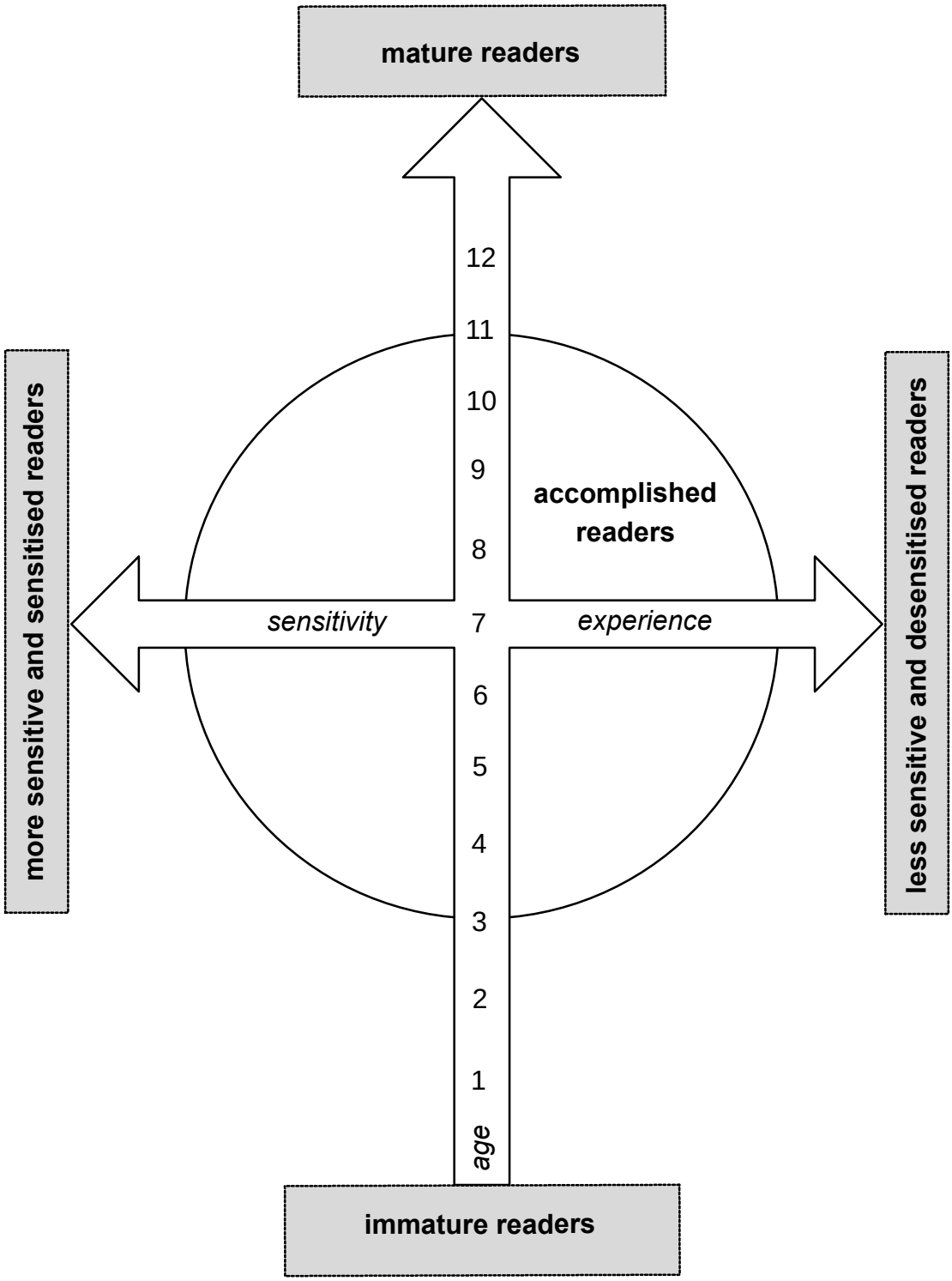
> When she [a woman called Prisia] was imprisoned in a dungeon, she found a needle and injured her face [to make sure the master loses his sexual interest in her]. Children [at the age 13-14] felt a lot of compassion toward her. The heroine, Prisia proved that she was loyal to her husband. She was faithful to him. However, when her husband saw her injured face, he did not hug or kiss her; he just said, "Poor you.

> Time cures. You'll be fine". So, he addressed her like an injured dog. Children understood. (016U)

In summary, accomplished readers were children who gained enough knowledge and life experience, and who reached a sufficient level of maturity to understand complex and controversial topics. Usually, they were older than 7-8. Participants from both countries believed there was merit in discussing picturebooks representing violence with accomplished readers, even if the themes were somewhat disturbing or upsetting. The Australian participants seemed to be more *overprotective* than those from Ukraine; however, this might be explained by the Australian's referencing of pre-school children (e.g., naïve and scared readers), while Ukrainian participants talked about children in general, of any age. Some Ukrainian participants insisted that children should read books that foster emotional intelligence, compassion and empathy even if the content of the book was upsetting. Australian participants had more reserved views on this; often they were preoccupied with upsetting readers. However, they also agreed that picturebooks representing violence are worth discussing with accomplished readers.

Figure 7

Accomplished Readers



4.4.7. Conclusions: children reading books representing violence

When judging the appropriateness of picturebooks representing violence, it was clear that the research participants often priorities the child-centred dimension. To decide if a book was appropriate, participants looked at children's levels of maturity and sensitivity. The maturity corresponded to the child's ability to understand complex abstract ideas. If a picturebook scene seemed to be too nuanced and sophisticated to be comprehended by all child readers, many gatekeepers said an age limit should be imposed. Generally, if representations of violence were perceived as *safe*, the recommended age was 7 or older. Children younger than 7, the gatekeepers believed, should not have access to such material. If the discussed picturebook featured explicit representations of violence (e.g., war, suicide), the age limit should rise to 12 or higher. In Ukraine, the age limit for reading picturebooks about controversial topics often was higher than in Australia if the books belonged to realistic or historical fiction; Ukrainian participants said those books could be read after children turned 13, 14 or even 15. At the same time, if the illustrated book was written in a fairy tale genre, the Ukrainian participants lowered the age limit to 5 or 6, or even younger in some cases, whereas the Australian participants suggested fairy tales should be read by 9- or 10-year-olds.

In addition to maturity, a child's sensitivity was taken into account. Participants often tried to predict a child's emotional response to a book based on previous experience of working with children. The emotions they anticipated included fear, anxiety, sadness and disgust. Moreover, participants from both countries were aware of different *sensitivities* among a homogenous group of the same age children (e.g., classmates). The Australian participants believed past traumas were a major cause of a child's sensitivity; whereas Ukrainian participants usually linked sensitivity to personality traits.

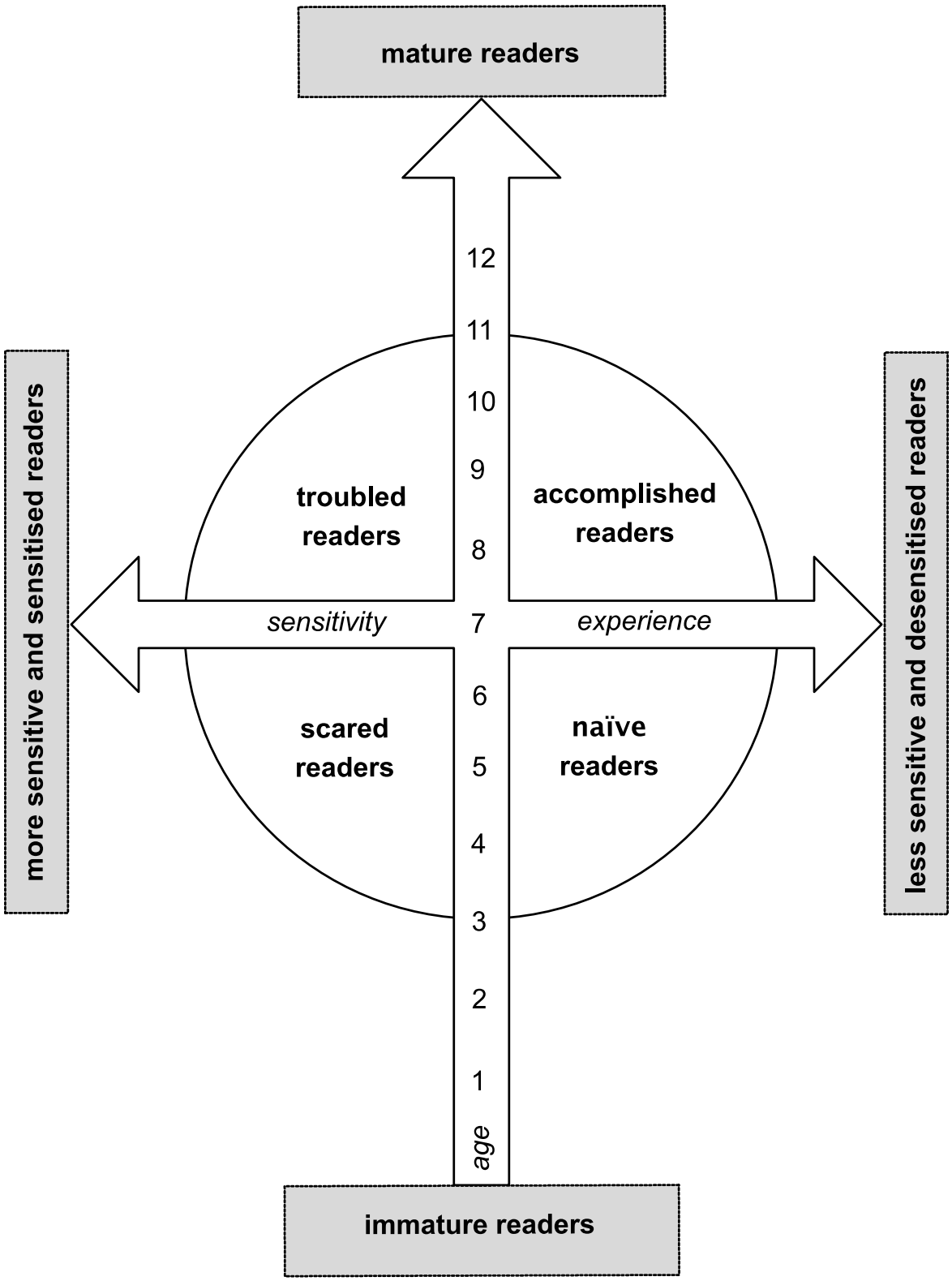
The children's age, maturity and sensitivity became cornerstones in gatekeepers' construction of four child reader categories engaging with picturebooks representing violence (i.e., scared, naïve, troubled and accomplished). Scared readers were immature and oversensitive readers, usually older than 6, who were likely to be frightened by fictional stories and images. Naïve readers were immature children who usually would not notice violence in the story and would therefore not be scared. Troubled readers were mature children with a high level of sensitivity; often they were older than 6 and younger than 12.

However, participants had different opinions about the age at which a particular child could be regarded as a troubled reader. Accomplished readers were mature child readers who could comprehend complex ideas and cope with emotionally challenging topics. Often, the accomplished readers were older than 6; however, in several cases they were also older than 12. Overall, the age boundaries for each category were rather fluid and suggestive. Also, the four categories were not mutually exclusive in real life; instead, these were ideal types in which real individual child readers may be seen as approximations.

The Australian and Ukrainian research participants perceived their gatekeeping roles slightly differently. Australian participants who believed children should be protected perceived themselves as guardians responsible for protecting children from emotional discomfort. Ukrainian participants who believed children should know uncomfortable truth about life and be ready to encounter reality believed they were guides who directed children toward a greater emotional awareness and a more complex perception of reality. Participants from both countries agreed that after children reached a certain age, level of maturity and level of sensitivity, and become accomplished readers, they would benefit from discussing picturebooks representing violence with adults.

Figure 8

Young Readers who Read Picturebooks Representing Violence



4.5. The book-centred dimension: violence in texts and illustrations

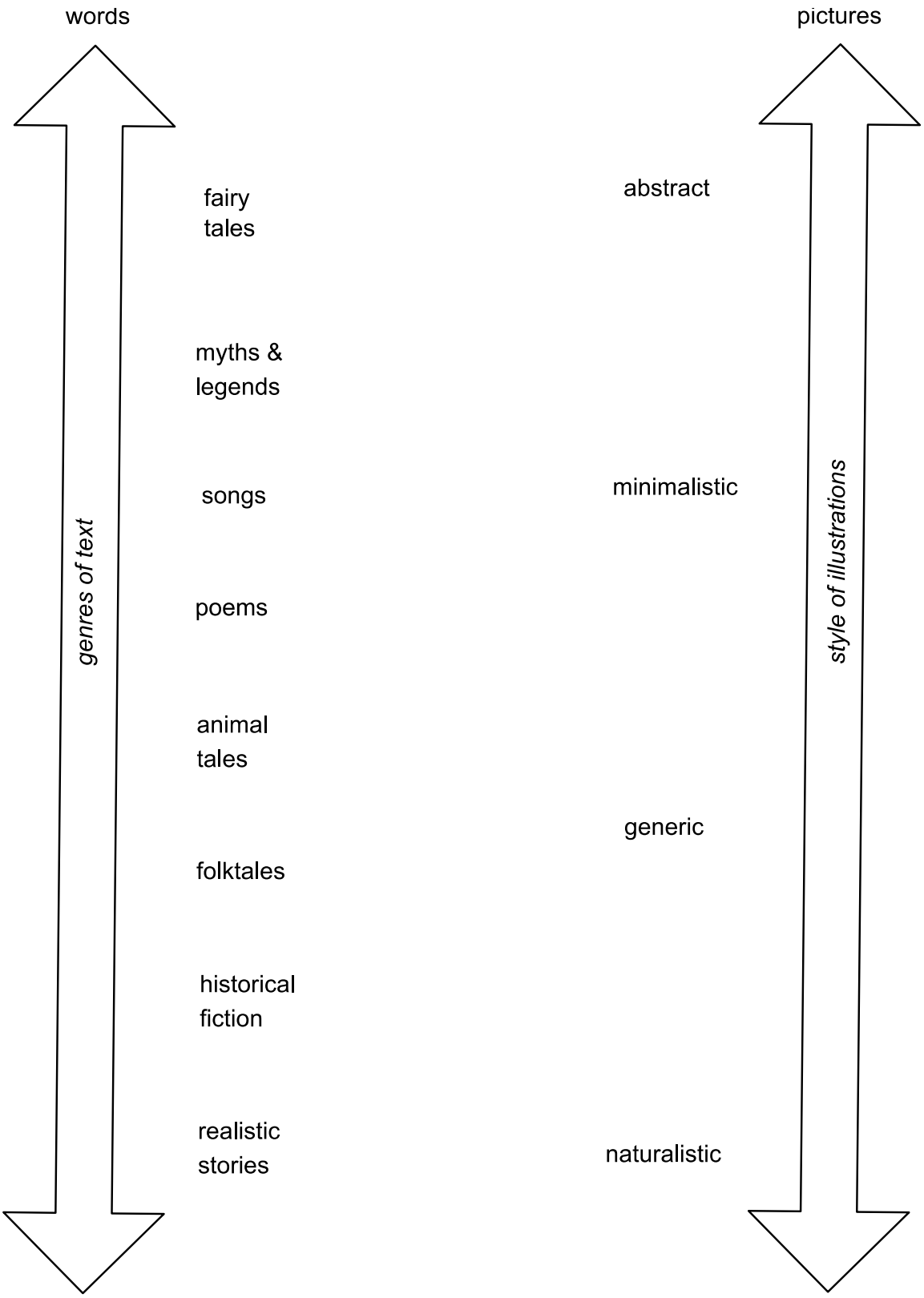
This section explains how verbal and visual representations of violence were interpreted by the gatekeepers. First, I explore gatekeepers' interpretations of verbal representations (text); second, I study their interpretations of visual representations (illustrations); third, I recognise how they judged violence in both words and pictures. To reveal how various features of text are assessed by gatekeepers when deciding on a book's appropriateness, I examine several genres, types of characters and settings which offer different levels of fictionality. I explain how the differences in the levels of fictionality impact gatekeepers' judgements about the representations of violence. In addition to studying how gatekeepers interpret texts, I examine how they interpret visual representations of violence in picturebooks. Here, I define *child friendly* and *mature* illustrations and explain how the styles of drawing and other aesthetic features of illustrations influence the interpretations of violence in picturebooks. Then, I explore the influence of amount, intensity and purpose of violence represented in text and illustrations on the decision-making process. Finally, I draw conclusions about fictional violence in picturebooks, where I demonstrate how different types of fictional violence were constructed by the research participants.

4.5.1. Gatekeepers' responses to violence and levels of fictionality in picturebook texts

Participant judgements of representations of violence in picturebooks were connected to literary genre and level of fictionality. If a genre described unlikely events happening to fictional characters in unrealistic settings (e.g., fairy tales, legends), representations of violence were perceived as *palatable*, or as unseen and invisible to young readers. If a genre combined features of realism and fantasy, some representations of violence were seen as *justified* or *righteous*. However, if a picturebook contained a realistic story with explicit details, representations of violence were seen as inappropriate. Hence, a literary genre, a character and a setting constructed a certain level of fictionality, and the level of fictionality impacted how violence was perceived by the gatekeepers.

Figure 9

The Representation of Levels of Fictionality in Picturebooks



4.5.1.1. High level of fictionality: fairy tales, myths and legends

Fairy tales, myths and legends – literary genres which derive from oral tradition – were perceived as suitable for young children, even if they contained certain representations of violence. The main feature of these genres enabling this attitude toward fictional violence was the high level of fictionality. Story events were often unlikely to happen in real life; endings were always happy (or at least hopeful); characters were clearly imaginary and the settings were otherworldly or some other fantastic world. Participants agreed that because reader expectations of the fantasy genres, violence in fairy tales, legends and myths was less noticeable than in other genres, and treated in a softer manner. 025A explained that children should be able to understand the fictionality of the Ukrainian tale about the horse and the wolf, saying children "see it as a story. They see it as something we can discuss" (025A). 023A expressed a similar idea about tale "Ivasyk-Telesyk" (2013), saying, "Because it's a fable kind of story, if you were reading a series of those stories and the children were getting used to that genre, then I wouldn't say there is any issue at all" (023A). In the interviews, fairy tales, legends and myths were seen as formulaic stories with a predictable plot, *good versus evil* struggle, imaginary characters, a moral message, and a happy ending. Consequently, even if the texts contained some elements of violence (e.g., a hero killing a dragon) they were perceived as *safe* reading for children who were 6 and sometimes even younger.

To justify the presence of violence in a story, the participants often searched for the the *good overcoming evil* idea: villains (e.g., dragons, witches, giants, snake-people, wolves etc.) were expected to be injured or killed; the main characters (often children) were expected to survive and thrive; the moral order of the universe was to be restored. To explain this, Australian participants would often refer to *Hansel and Gretel*. It was important for the participants that the witch was killed and the children were saved, and not the other way around. 029A mentioned that if goodness triumphs over evil, violence in the story was *palatable*. Similar, 020A expressed the idea that a hero should face danger in the convention of a fairy tale or a legend since "most children, by the time they come to school, have an understanding and expectation of tales with good characters who are going to be put into some form of threat, and they are quite happy with that" on the condition that the protagonists win at the end. Interestingly, the main character, or the hero, did not need to

be an extremely *good* person for the formula *good overcoming evil* to work. 031A explained the difference between *goodness* and *evil* in tales saying, “It’s this idea that there is a righteous side, and the unjust side. And, as long as you're on the righteous side, it’s OK” (031A). Ukrainian participants had similar thoughts on the topic. They expected the good to triumph over evil in fairy tales, legends and myths; and they believed the features of fantasy genres increased the *palatability* of picturebooks representing violence. For example, 015U said, “I wouldn’t say there is violence in [the Ukrainian fairy tale] “Kotyhoroshko”, well, the violence we have in real life. This is just good overcoming evil” (015U). In addition, 013U said, “In my opinion, our old tales… They contain no violence. They are good because the good always triumphs over evil. They can be read to children” (013U). 019U expressed similar genre expectations of the tale *Cat and Rooster* saying that the scene where Fox abducted Rooster was bearable because “this is a tale. We all know what a folktale is: there is some threat; however, good always wins over evil” (019U). She elaborated her ideas saying, “When we talk about fairytales, we mean another reality” (019U) and added that children’s games often involved violence; however, because these were just games happening in some *other reality*, no one would see them as a real threat. This way, fairy tales could be compared to children’s games as both adults and children understood that these were just fruits of imagination. 001U explained that as a child she “perceived a tale as something unreal and imaginary. Because it was just a tale, just make-believe, I [she] never thought this could happen in real life. This was just a tale” (001U). This way, similar to the Australian research participants, the Ukrainian participants thought violence in fairy tales and similar fantasy genres was *palatable* since good would triumph over evil, and the entire story was perceived as fiction by adults and children.

Furthermore, fictional violence seemed to be bearable if the ending was happy. 020A explained, “Because of the fairy tale’s structure here, we know there’s going to be a good outcome, so that the violence is sort of *safe violence*”. 017U said that the majority of tales can be read to young children “as long as the ending is happy” (017U). 010U believed the Australian tale *Blossom Possum* (2006) “can be read to any age, even to very young. Because of friendship… Because of the happy ending … Children can be told that the main characters survived and returned home happily” (010U). Discussing the Ukrainian tale “Ivasyk-Telesyk” (2013), participants concluded that the tale could be read to young children because “it has a happy ending” (031A) and even though the snake-maiden is being

baked alive, “the fact that the child [Ivasyk-Telesyk] is rescued kind of makes it OK” (031A). As 029A explained, “The snake lady going into the fire is, probably, not what you remember so much as the outcome of the story which is really exciting because the child escapes”, pointing out that the happy ending softens the harsh elements of the story. 023A explained that “even though there is violence in them [stories], there is a resolution”. 030A agreed saying, “I’m sure, children would, probably, say, you know, “It is wonderful that he gets saved””. She elaborated, “As the story unfolds and he becomes the victor, really, the children would then embrace the story, and they would not go away from that fearful … because this little boy manages to come out on top to be the winner of this particular episode against the snake people … They [4- to 8-year-olds] do like happy endings” (025A). Ukrainian participant 011U said, “But there is a happy ending. Our [Ukrainian] folktales end with happy endings. Our tales can be read to children. I would recommend all of them to children” (011U). 017U explained that, based on her experience, children “can read sad stories about animals … For example, [they can read] about a dog’s adventures and tribulations. But it must end with a happy ending” (017U). It was clear that the research participants mostly expected the ending of a fairy tale to be happy; and they believed that if the ending was happy, some violent episodes against villains would be forgiven and forgotten. The reader, it was explained, would remember the end of the story; therefore, it is important that the overall take home message was positive.

A high level of fictionality could also be created in picturebooks by the presence of fantastic characters. Imaginary characters would contribute to the sense of fictionality and the impossibility of the described events in real life. 030A said that *Not Now, Bernard* (1980) “is a nonsense book because monsters don't come and eat children … There are no monsters in this world. The monsters don't exist” (030A). Nevertheless, 004U argued that even monsters could be perceived as a *real* threat if children are very young and understand the book literally: children younger than 6 might not know monsters are imaginary. Commenting on *Not Now, Bernard* (1980), 019U said that because it is a tale, it takes place in an imaginary world and features a monster as an antagonist, it is suitable reading for children; she explained, “Children enjoy constructing dynamic plots with monsters themselves … [*Not Now, Bernard*] is a safe story” (019U). Although the participants had different thoughts about the picturebooks representing monsters eating children, many agreed that the fictional nature of monsters softens the violence in tales. Monsters were

not the only characters that could make violent tales suitable for young readers. Among other imaginary characters there were witches, snake-people and dragons. The topic of the dragon deserves special attention.

Dragons, or any other mythical creatures presented as antagonists, rarely evoked pity on the part of the participants. By contrast, in many cases, the expectation was that *the dragon must be killed*. Both Australian and Ukrainian participants agreed on this. The lack of compassion toward mythical creatures could be encapsulated in the following words: "Fighting these mythical creatures is nothing really… not a big deal" (028A), and "Somehow, beheading a dragon is not perceived as violence. It is normalised. Children think, "It's a monster! The monster deserved it". But it is a living creature; not to mention that it's a rare species" (012U). There are several reasons why dragons must die in fairy tales. Most importantly, readers expected this to happen for there had been a long-lasting tradition to represent dragons as inherently evil. 020A suggested that "because a dragon is presented as something evil it's always the dragon that dies, because that is the way we judge things" (020A). Tradition, therefore, was not in the dragon's favour. Another justification for killing dragons might derive from an unconscious desire to protect *the tribe* of humans if they are attacked by any non-human individuals. 028A said, "Because we are humans, we probably hope that the human will survive over the dragon because the dragon is an animal, and the dragon has big teeth, and big claws, and looks very scary … It's like you are wanting the human to win over the dragon" (028A). Consequently, *dragon* was almost a synonym of scary and evil in traditional tales, and therefore it was expected to be overcome by *good* as the genre convention demanded.

Unlike dragons, which were expected to be killed, wolves had a chance to survive in fairy tales without reader disapproval. Yet, it was still anticipated that wolves were punished for bad behaviour; and corporal punishment was seen as acceptable. 020A explained, "The wolf is always the bad guy … The kids just accept it that the wolf's going be battered. It's part of their literary culture". 031A commented on the illustration where the wolf was kicked by the horse, justifying: "But, you see, that's OK, because wolves are bad… [laughing] They aren't, of course. They aren't strictly bad. That's the characterisation". 029A agreed that wolves are "always portrayed as a baddy; we all know that the wolf is bad". Discussing the same illustration, 028A said, "I guess the wolf is given a bad rap [reputation] in general in stories. So, just by looking at the picture of it we think that the wolf is evil

because that's how he is portrayed in other stories, like "Little Red Riding Hood", or other tales. So, it seems OK… Because it's just what we expect" and "Because it's a wolf being kicked, it makes it seem like it's OK for him to be violently treated". Wolves, therefore did not have a positive reputation in traditional tales and readers often thought it was fair for them to be punished, pushed, kicked or harmed.

The list of villain-characters whose rights could be easily violated in tales depended on culture to which the stories belonged. Whereas traditional Western European fairy tales represented dragons and wolves (not to mention witches, giants and others) as *bad* characters who deserve almost no compassion, the Australian tales would use *dingos* instead of wolves, and the Ukrainian tales would replace dragons and witches with snake-people. Discussing a tale where a dingo was being beaten by two kangaroos, 028A said: "I guess, again, the dingo here is, probably, an equivalent to a wolf in the Australian kingdom" meaning that the reader would not feel sorry for him, since he was a *bad* character who had to be overcome by the *good*. Ukrainian participants agreed that snake-people were expected to be killed by a good hero.

Also, the participants explained how some representations of violence may be made more *palatable* by unrealistic settings. Neither adults nor children would see a story as real if the place, time and clothes of the characters were imaginary. Looking at the illustration of "Three Little Pigs" (2013), A27A said, "I don't see any harm in that… All kids can see that even though there is violence … it is said as a story, that is not real. I mean, wolves don't wear clothes [pointing at the illustration]. So, yes, that's a silly story. And, pigs don't wear hats" (A27A). Similarly, 019U said about the Ukrainian tale "Sirko" (2015), "Because people are wearing national costumes and the events are taking place in the country in some distant past, it looks like a mythical reality" (019U) where the time and place were very different from the reader's current circumstances.

Fairy tales, myths and legends representing fictional reality were perceived as *palatable* or *safe* despite the presence of some representations of violence. These texts had a high level of fictionality because they described unrealistic events, featured fantastic characters (e.g., dragons, snake-humans, monsters) and portrayed fictional settings; they were seen as pure fiction and often compared to games children play. The participants usually saw fairy tales as appropriate because, in this genre, goodness triumphed and evil was punished; the happy ending was almost always inevitable. The fantasy genre, therefore,

was a predictor of whether a story representing violence would be eagerly read to young children.

4.5.1.2. Medium level of fictionality: historical fiction, songs and poems

Fictional violence was considered justifiable in picturebooks that described historical events either in prose or in poetry. These included picturebooks representing wars of the past in prose (e.g., *My Dog* (2001)*, My Mother's Eyes* (2011)) and in poetry (e.g., *Yaroslavna's Lament* (2016)*, And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015)) as well as poems representing events from the colonial past (e.g., *Waltzing Matilda* (2007)). Participants perceived the representations of the First World War and the Second World War in picturebooks as having the right to exist because the scenes referred to significant and well-known historical events. It was agreed that there was little merit of hiding the truth from children. For example, 003U said, "If these are historical events, if they really took place… After all, we study the First and the Second World War…" (003U). At the same time, it was believed that children younger than 6 would not understand the historical context and should not be given books that describe war. Some implicit representations of war (e.g., *Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* (2015)) were seen as suitable for readers between 6 and 12. However, other representations (e.g., *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015)) were considered appropriate only for readers older than 12. The connection to history, therefore, was seen as a marker of appropriateness since it the historical events described could not be avoided or changed; even if they were violent, they had to be accepted.

Moreover, participants were likely to justify fictional violence in picturebooks if it was a part of the national myth. This was true for narratives describing colonial past. 020A said, she would use *Waltzing Matilda* (2007) in the classroom despite its controversial quality "because it's part of our national heritage" (020A). Similarly, a Ukrainian teacher said:

> There are not too many texts about violence in our [Ukrainian] literature … There are texts describing the struggle for independence and the struggle for a better life. Yes. Children read those books and they understand the history of our Motherland,

> they see that it has consisted of the struggle for freedom, the struggle for independence and the struggle against oppression. (016U)

To support his claim, 016U gave an example from a classical short story taught at high school where a serf had escaped from his master and the master was threatening to torture the man as soon as he was found; the teacher explained, “This is violence … Children can see that the master chooses to treat the man cruelly. Is this because the man is a peasant? Is this because he is a serf? Clearly, we are talking about the 1930s here…” (016U). However, the teacher also explained that children older than 12 do not identify with the characters of historical fiction. They empathise with them; however, they perceive them as imaginary figures and see the story as a fiction. Similar, Australian participants agreed that if the characters of a historical fiction were adults, children were not likely to identify with them, but rather perceive them as heroes of a national myth or legend.

Not only events and characters influenced reader perceptions; historical settings played their role too. 005U explained that in historical fiction, “violence is justified by the historical context to a child. Reading it, everyone thinks, “We are very lucky to live in present”. It is much more difficult for a young person to read a contemporary book describing the present reality”. Another participant, 014U, offered an example of a Ukrainian story with a historical setting and realistic characters and events: *Fedko-Khalamydnyk* by Volodymyr Vynnychenko, written in 1902 and published as an illustrated book in 1991. The text represented emotional violence (humiliation) and physical violence (corporal punishment) against a boy called Fedko. 014U explained that the story explored socio-economic inequality. She said, “The text has it all: there is psychological and moral violence inflicted by Fedko’s parents and, of course, there is physical violence as Fedko’s father punishes him for his behaviour which was seen as inappropriate at the time because their family lived in the house of their master” (014U). While Fedko was punished for his misbehaviour, the master’s son was not. The story ended with Fedko’s death as a consequence of this inequality. 014U concluded that this story was used in the classroom to teach children that inequality, corporal punishment and domestic violence are unacceptable. The story was realistic enough to evoke a strong emotional response; however, the reality described there was rather distant for young contemporary readers and therefore a safe space was offered; children did not associate violence in the book with

their own life. 014U said, “Regarding children’s emotional state, they are deeply worried because nowadays the situation where children are beaten is hardly relatable … They all agree that violence should not be present – not among family members, nor among classmates” (014U). Therefore, stories set in the past were perceived as distant and unlikely to happen today.

Picturebooks based on historical songs were considered suitable for children too because they referred to the distant past and were perceived as an inevitable part of a collective memory. Discussing *Waltzing Matilda* (2007), 025A said, “No, I don't think that would concern any child at all. Even though, that is a real person and we have a real billabong here … That is part of our history, and it would have to be looked at as it happened long ago in our colonial past” (025A). Also, 019U said, “If I was discussing this book [with a group of children], I would talk about things in general: imagine how life looked in the past, how it differed from our life; their laws differed, human behaviour differed and they would make different choices…” (019U). She explained that in Ukraine, “We also have similar historical songs … They reflect some mythical reality of *gods and heroes* and we expect gods and heroes to be at war all the time … This is just a *historical reality*, reality of the past” (019U). This means the events described in historical songs could not be related to a child’s everyday life; they were seen as distant and therefore safe to discuss. At the same time, some participants wondered whether children would understand a reality that is very different from contemporary times. 014U said about *Waltzing Matilda* (2007), “It’s suitable for high school students because … it will be difficult for children to understand the historical background, and the hardships of the man … Also, he [the swagman] is an adult. It’s suitable for children at the age of 14 or 15 (grade 9)” (014U). The Australian participants had a very different perspective on the same historical song. They said, “We’ve all grown up with this song that we almost don’t think about it” (031A) and “We used to sing this song from the beginning till the end [in primary school] … it’s almost like a national anthem, really”. This example demonstrated that while historical narratives representing violence were seen as reading suitable for 12-year-olds and older, historical songs which became part of a culture were perceived as suitable for any age. The reason might be that such historical songs work on a symbolic level and establish a national myth. A similar role can be attributed to war narratives referring to the wars of the past and published as picturebooks.

Unlike in fairy tales, the traditional happy ending was often absent in the picturebooks representing war. The books were still perceived as suitable for children if they offered the readers some space for hope. The theme of hope was prominent in the interviews. Listening to my description of one of the Ukrainian stories, 031A asked, "Is there a chance of hope there?" 023A said, "There are quite a few children's picturebooks where bad guys are doing bad things, but there is always hope at the end". Similarly, 025A said, "It would be the story of hope that one would always, no matter what circumstances, would always hope for a good outcome" and "That story has a wonderful ending because it shows once again hope" (025A). Representations of hope appeared to be an antidote to representations of violence, including those depicted in picturebooks about war.

4.5.1.3. Low level of fictionality: realistic stories in contemporary settings

Picturebooks with realistic representations were perceived as suitable for readers at the age of 12 or older due to the complex themes they presented. They were seen as valuable tools to discuss contemporary issues. The example of an Australian picturebook describing realistic events and characters is *Cat on the Island* (2008). The settings are unknown, just an island; however, it would be possible to imagine a similar story happening in a real location. The Australian participants said about *Cat on the Island* (2008)*:*

> The double paged spread with the cat … was brilliant, absolutely fantastic, scary, but it captured the damage that cats can do to native wildlife really effectively. (020A)

> It communicated the understanding of the impact of the introduced species … you could ask: "Is this right or wrong? What do you think ethically? Is it OK to kill an animal if there are too many of them or if they are killing species that are special to our place?" (028A)

> This is a wonderful story because nothing comes back when it's extinct ... It has a wonderful message! "Look after our world, please!" You'd go on to discuss things that have become extinct, and why they have become extinct, and how can we help them not become extinct? (025A)

In addition to discussing the picturebook themes in general, participants suggested making connections to the local context and familiar situations for the students. The participants referred to some relevant local issues that could be discussed alongside *Cat on the Island* (2008) themes. They said:

> We could discuss the example of the cane toad in Queensland, and how that became a pest. And I think in New Zealand as well possums became a big issue. So, they were giving possums contraceptives or they were also hunting the possums; so, they were giving people money for killing the possums. (028A)

> When such a thing happens, this is what you get. I mean, we've got this happening in Westbury at the moment. We've got our little Eastern Barred Bandicoots and we find them dead on the road because the cats attack them. (031A)

Consequently, it was believed that picturebooks with realistic representations of violence against animals could be used to discuss both global and local ecological problems. The Ukrainian participants did not see the discussed example because I only became aware of this picturebook after conducting the Ukrainian interviews. The Ukrainian participants mostly referred to contemporary young adult novels when discussing violence in realistic CL. Contemporary picturebooks were not mentioned. More research is needed about realistic Ukrainian picturebooks representing violence.

4.5.1.4. Levels of fictionality: its impact on interpreting fictional violence

The interviews with Australian and Ukrainian participants demonstrated how the level of fictionality in a story influenced the interpretation of fictional violence. The main contributing factors were genre, character and settings. Violence in highly fictional genres (e.g., fairy tales) that featured unlikely events in fantastic settings was perceived differently than violence in less fictional genres (e.g., a short story) exploring contemporary issues and representing realistic events, characters and settings. It was evident that higher levels of fictionality might soften the representations of violence in a picturebook. Whereas stories

with lower levels of fictionality might scare readers. Alternatively, they may also help the reader empathise with the characters. 019U said, “In my opinion, it is the most traumatic when it is realistic. If this [event from *Not Now, Bernard* (1980)] happened in my reality, I’d be horrified. But as long as it is an imaginary, symbolic, fictional reality, like Neverland, then, you know…” At the same time, if the scary story was realistic, but the reader was emotionally ready to comprehend it, such a story would be memorable and useful for discussing significant and controversial themes in the classroom. 014U said about *Fedko-Khalamydnyk* (1906), “They read stories like that eagerly. They want to know how the story will end. This theme interests them” (014U).

Although more research is required about realistic picturebooks representing violence, it is clear that violence in the books with higher levels of fictionality was perceived as suitable for children who were 6 or older; stories with lower levels of fictionality were suitable for readers who were 12 or older. The books featuring historical events or historical settings were considered suitable for children between 6 and 12 if the context was familiar. However, if the historical books represented war, the age limit would depend both on the explicitness of descriptions and readers’ familiarity with the cultural context. The comparison of cross-cultural interpretations of stories representing violence with various levels of fictionality lead to the conclusion that levels of fictionality in stories influence perceptions of violence.

4.5.2. Gatekeepers’ interpretations of fictional violence in illustrations

The research participants often talked about the importance of illustrations in children’s books and the advantage of picturebooks (or illustrated books) over books with no illustrations. Some illustrations were perceived as *child-friendly*, others were perceived as *mature illustrations*, and all of them were perceived as important when deciding if the book is appropriate. 027A explained that the power of illustrations is in their approachability: the reader can relate to them, understand them, respond to them sometimes even better than to words. “What I am teaching is the cleverness of how that message is communicated”, 027A said, and then continued, “The strength of the message comes through not so much from words (although, the words are just as powerful as the pictures), but the strength of those pictures hits you. It’s very effective as a text, and you can respond to it” (027A).

Similarly, 031A said, “The illustrations support that theme in a powerful way. So, I think you just have to be careful with how you use those, but they can certainly exaggerate the impression and the message”.

In this way, the Australian participants mostly agreed that the illustrations could enrich and elaborate the meanings expressed in words. This is why the illustrations should be accounted for in the process of book selection. The Ukrainian participants shared very similar views. They said:

> Children like entertainment, and when we ask them what they paid attention to [in the book], they [reply that] they pay attention to illustrations. Always. The book-cover. (001U)

> Illustrations are extremely important for the younger readers; sometimes, even more important than text; because they process information with their eyes first, and only afterwards do they process the information with their ears and mind. (007U)

> We always discuss books with our readers. If a book has illustrations, we pay attention to the illustrations. Because illustration is, perhaps, one of the most important features of the book: the book cover and the illustrations inside. There are books with horrible illustrations. The book is awesome; the text, themes, plot, ending – everything is perfect, but illustrations are so bad that you want to cover them with something and change them. (002U)

> Younger children, for instance, love illustrations. They want a book to be illustrated. However, their tastes vary. Sometimes, they look at the illustrations, and they do not like them. The book is interesting, but the illustrations are average. Some children would refuse to read it, some would read it and say, “Great book! But the illustrations are average”. Children love illustrations. They like beautiful illustrations. Parents pay attention to illustrations too. (006U)

> I would not borrow a book like this for my grandchildren because they judge the books by illustrations. Illustrations mean a lot to them. (009U)

The illustrations clearly impacted the gatekeepers' opinion about the appropriateness of books. The features of illustrations which were the most significant when judging representations of violence were: the style of drawing (naturalistic or abstract), the explicitness of the representation (explicit or implicit), the perceived beauty (beautiful, unpleasant or ugly) and the colours (bright, vivid, intense, or dark, faded and dull).

The drawing style influenced gatekeepers' judgments about the acceptability of the violence shown: more abstract representations were seen as more appropriate. The amount of detail mattered too. The illustrations with less details and less explicitness were seen as more palatable. The perceived beauty of a book could impact on the willingness of adults to share the book with children too. In some cases, the adults were more likely to tolerate the scene of violence if the pictures were beautiful. Finally, colourful and bright illustrations were seen as more suitable for young children than dull and dark illustrations. Consequently, books that depicted a scene of violence in dark colours were less likely to be approved by gatekeepers.

4.5.2.1. Drawing style and the gatekeepers' interpretations of violence

The style of drawing was often considered during the interviews. Violence in illustrations drawn in minimalistic or generic style with a small number of details was seen as more *fictional* and therefore less dangerous. If the style was *cartoonish* and unrealistic, participants were more likely to dismiss representations of violence. Both Australian and Ukrainian participants agreed on this. For example, 025A said:

> The cartoony drawings do extinguish a lot of the anxiety because they're not real people and the children know it. If they were real people, the children would get really worried. That's why the author wouldn't put real people there. That would be hideous, but, no. Well, when the drawings are like that, they tend to take it as the thing that is meant to be a comedy, a humorous story, not to be anxious or worried

> about, but something that is entirely something which meant to be a fun thing. (025A)

In line with this, 019U said that abstract representations of violence are better than naturalistic; she said about *Not Now, Bernard* (1980), "These illustrations are very fairy-tale-like, very cute and not realistic … I think it is an entirely different world, entirely different" (019U). In addition, cartoonish and comic representations of violence were seen as softer than naturalistic ones. After mentioning a comic book about Ivan Franko, 002U said:

> There is war and revolution [in this comic book] and children know there are victims, death and, I beg your pardon, dead bodies. However, in a comic book it is represented differently. It is shown in a cartoonish style, it is slightly deformed, it is not realistic, and perhaps, it is not perceived by a child in such a painful way. It [the representation of violence] is softened. (002U)

In addition, 003U said about the scene from "Horse and Wolf" (2015) where the horse kicks the wolf, "In my opinion, this illustration is cheerful [laughing], well, at least for a fairy tale". Thus, similar to the text, the *fictionality* of illustrations influenced the gatekeepers' perceptions of violence. Furthermore, the fictionality in visual text was perceived as a protective mechanism for preventing children to see things they have not seen before. 001U said, "Abstractness enhances a child's imagination. Therefore, each child has their own way of seeing. There is no need to use a naturalistic style of drawing" (001U). Meaning that, if a child is not ready to see the violent scene, their imagination can offer them a softer interpretation. This was true for the representations of war.

The majority of participants agreed that realistic and naturalistic illustrations representing war were more suitable for older children. Indeed, 011U even said, in reference to *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015), "I would not recommend this book to children. I reckon, this particular book is an authentic book about war, and children should not read it". 019U said this book could be suitable for children older than 12 because "these illustrations remind… of course they would not be so arty… but they remind me of illustrations in history textbooks when soldiers are depicted with weapons and in historically accurate clothes". Realistic

representations of war were seen as open to a narrow interpretation only; the presence of violence was inevitable.

There were different views about abstract representations of war among the Ukrainian participants. Some participants said the abstract portrayal of war is much better than naturalistic; others said that even abstract representations of war can be damaging for the mental wellbeing of a reader. Discussing *The War that Changed Rondo*, 005U said, "I am not sure if it is possible to represent war aggression without blood or physiological details in a more incredible way than here. There are black flowers (as Ukrainians say *weeds*) which give no hope, one of the heroes is wounded, the star has its edges burnt…" (005U). Whereas 012U said about the same book, "I don't think children should read this. There is a lot of symbolism, too many sharp lines. Even little boys do not draw war like this. The tanks here are made of paper, but they look way too realistic. I find these illustrations depressing" (012U). Perhaps, the difference in the two responses can be explained in that 005U perceived the style as abstract and fictional, whereas 012U thought that, despite their overall abstractness, the images look *too realistic*. Taking into account all participant views, it was clear that the style of drawing influenced how representations of violence were perceived by the gatekeepers: the cartoonish style softened the perception; the naturalistic and realistic styles created a certain resistance to sharing the discussed books with young children.

In addition to style, the participants were concerned with the explicitness of represented violence. Explicit representations of violence (i.e., those with plenty of detail) were perceived as illustrations aimed at older children, and more implicit representations were perceived as suitable for younger children. Australian participants described some representations as too *graphic* or too *explicit*. 024A explained, "We'd look at the treatment of the subject by the author and the illustrator … how graphic and explicit it is". 027A agreed that "it's all about how it is communicated". 020A expressed a similar opinion, saying, "It's how graphic they make that description, and whether there is a purpose for being that graphic".

If a representation of fictional violence was implicit, the illustrations were perceived as *palatable*. This was true for the picturebooks representing the Second World War. For instance, one Ukrainian participant said about *Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* (2015), "I think this illustration is perfect because we can see the darkness … We look at the sharp shapes, we

understand this is a weapon; however, the presence of a weapon is not explicit here" (005U). In addition, an Australian participant said:

> If you want to impart the horror, you have to have some detail about how horrible it was. But how much detail, I think, depends on the age of your audience. And I think you have to be very mindful of that. The most stunning book I have ever seen on the Holocaust is *Rose Blanche* [1983] … It has the most amazing illustrations that convey the horror without graphic detail. Very sensitive book! But aimed at primary and upwards. There is no way it can be aimed at little kids. So, my idea of violence is… It comes down to how graphic and detailed it is. Whether graphic illustrations or descriptions, so do the students really need to know that after you got punched in the nose, there was blood dripping and going all over the floor; how much is left to their imagination? (020A)

Overly detailed and explicit depictions of violence were seen as unnecessary by the Ukrainian participants too. For example, visual representations of war in *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015) were perceived by Ukrainian gatekeepers as too explicit and inappropriate for young children. They said:

> I don't think they [children] should read about war. They need to know from history books that the war happened. But do we really need to show them all the details?... I think, there is no need to represent it explicitly. (011U)

> I think this [book] is for adults. It is not for children. Of course, children should know facts, they should know that the war happened. But the details are so cruel here… I think, [it should be read] when children are able to make a conscious decision on their own and to decide if they want to read it. (004U)

> Definitely, I'd say *no* more likely than *yes*. Because the wasteland is depicted explicitly and with all honesty. (009U)

The age limit was different in Australia and Ukraine. In Australia, explicit representations of violence were mostly accepted at the age of 8 and older if other criteria were met (e.g., the book was culturally significant), whereas in Ukraine, explicit representations of violence were seen as *palatable* at the age of 12 and older if other traits of appropriateness were present. Overall, the lack of explicit depictions and the absence of too many details in illustrations were seen as preferable ways to represent violence in picturebooks.

If visual representations of violence were implicit or absent, the fictional violence in picturebook was seen as *palatable* because more than one interpretation of the scene was possible. For example, 030A said about *Yaroslavna's Lament* (2016), "I don't think that the picture shows that she wants to die. I think that really does show a loss". Because the suicidal thoughts were not shown in the illustration, the image could have been interpreted in many ways, and an uncomfortable topic could be avoided. As a result, the picturebook was seen as appropriate. The other example is the scene in the picturebook *Not Now, Bernard* (1980), where "…the monster ate Bernard up. Each and every bit of him". Australian participants said:

> That's a good illustration! I like the shoe. It's all what's left. (029A) (meaning that the scene of murder was left outside the picturebook spreads)

> It's funny, if the words weren't there, I wouldn't have thought that a boy has been eaten. I would have just thought that a monster is playing with a shoe… It looks extremely innocent! (028A)

Referring to idea of invisibility of violence in the illustrations, 022A said: "In terms of violence, I don't know any picturebook in which there is overt violence". Later, 022A expanded this idea using *The Great Bear* (2010) picturebook as an example:

> I do not know if we actually see that the bear has actually been beaten. You don't actually see it. We just see the pictures of angry people and again large bodies. And we get that the bear is severely, you know, maltreated. But... We don't see

> the violence. I can't think of a picturebook where we actually see that somebody is beaten… (022A)

4.5.2.2. The impact of beauty on gatekeepers' interpretations of violence

The participants were more likely to recommend books to readers and discuss them in the classroom if they thought the illustrations were beautiful. The level of attractiveness seemed to be related to the overall palatability of picturebooks. One of the arguments would often be that the picturebook should be discussed with children because, "this story … is beautifully illustrated" (023A), "it is a beautiful book" (027A), "that's a fascinatingly looking book!" (029A). Some Australian participants said, "I think these illustrations [in *Australian Gnomes* (1979)] are beautiful … not even thinking about the content of the illustrations. But [despite the presence of violence] they are beautifully done illustrations" (031A), and "That's a beautiful image, isn't it? [pointing at the book illustration in "Ivasyk-Telesyk" (2013)]. It's a very gentle image: he's going to fly away" (030A).

It is important to mention that the illustrations were seen as beautiful if the visual representations of violence were absent or if this was a socially acceptable violence (e.g., a cat catching a bird with his teeth, animals fighting) and present on just one or two pages of the entire book. The presence of violence in words, however, would not diminish the picturebooks' beauty: even when the words described an act of violence, the beautiful illustrations would soften their effect on the adult reader. Discussing the Ukrainian poem *Yaroslavna's Lament* (2016), where a protagonist expressed a deep sorrow and despair because she thought her husband was killed at war, 020A said: "Brilliant picture! Yes, I think, it would have a place, certainly in the secondary school, in an English class that would be fantastic!"

Similarly, the Ukrainian participants were more likely to recommend a picturebook to children if the illustrations were beautiful, even if the book dealt with controversial topics. They said about *Yaroslavna's Lament* (2016):

> Books like this are very beautiful. There are vivid colours and familiar images. Even if she is crying… she does not evoke pity… well, she is just crying, she is not weeping. It is a beautiful book. (018U)

> The illustration itself is very beautiful. We can see that this is just a sorrowful woman who awaits her husband and who has no certainty if he will return. (008U)

At the same time the beauty of illustration could not override the moral judgement about the representation of violence. 012U said about *Waltzing Matilda* (2007), "If you just look at the illustration, his deeds seem to be worthy: he was poor, he stole the sheep, and he committed suicide. Someone might like it. It is depicted beautifully. In reality, this is not the case. There is no such thing as a beautiful suicide". 022A said about the same book, "I would not read that story, having realised that there is a gun in it. Absolutely, not to an early childhood class. So, that is not happening" (022A). As a consequence, if the representation of violence was perceived by a gatekeeper as *palatable* (e.g., a fight scene among animals), beautiful illustrations could soften the interpretation of violence; however, if the scene of violence was morally condemned (e.g., suicide), the beauty had little impact on the appropriateness of the picturebook.

Of course, beauty was a subjective criterion influenced by the participants' tastes, culture and educational backgrounds. This could be seen in the discussion of *Blossom Possum* (2006) and *The Great Bear* (2010). While the majority of Ukrainian participants found the fight scene in *Blossom Possum* (2006) to be ugly and inaesthetic, the Australian participants either did not comment on it or said the book as a whole was beautiful. The reason for such a division was culture and certain aesthetic expectations of picturebook illustrations. The situation was more complex with *The Great Bear* (2010). Some participants disliked the illustrations greatly, whereas others loved them; their attitude, in fact, influenced their willingness to discuss the book with children. For example, an Australian participant who grew up in Australia, said about *The Great Bear* (2010), "These illustrations are beautiful. I would definitely share that with four- to eight-year-olds. Because it is the most beautiful book, and these are the most beautiful illustrations" (025A). An Australian participant who grew up in the USA had the opposite response to the same picturebook:

> H: You have, probably, heard about it. It's called *The Great Bear* (2010). It's a book about, basically, a travelling circus in which there is a bear who is severely abused by people…

031A: I've had this book in our library, and I have to say I just hated it.

H: Really? Why?

031A: I just… I don't like the illustrations. I find it so dark! And I just… I can't see how a child would even enjoy that book.

H: And did teachers use it in the classroom?

031A: I don't remember seeing it being used much at all. No.

It is difficult to say if culture was the major determinant in judging the beauty of the book; more data would be needed for this. However, it was clear that if the illustrations were seen as beautiful, the book was said to be worthy of discussion with students.

Furthermore, if the illustrations were perceived as ugly and unattractive, discussing a book representing violence was seen as an unnecessary burden: the book was less likely to be recommended or discussed. This was clear from the responses of the Ukrainian participants. While the Australian participants rarely called a book ugly or unattractive, the Ukrainian participants very often used *ugliness* and *unpleasantness* as a metric for judging a picturebook. For example, they said about the fight scene in *Blossom Possum* (2006):

I think, it is somewhat antiaesthetic. The emu is nice. But this [kangaroo]… (001U)

The kangaroos' muzzles are rather unpleasant. Overall, this image is not pleasant, although the illustration is alright… Well, I just don't like it… These muzzles do not resemble a kangaroo, they look like a rat (003U)

I don't like these illustrations. I would never buy a book like this for my own child. If I saw this illustration, I would not buy a book for the library collection … If we talk about emotions triggered by this illustration, it is… If I was about to buy the book, and saw this illustration… it is repulsive (005U)

018U: Well, I would not give this book to a child. I find these illustrations unpleasant, really unpleasant.

H: What makes them unpleasant?

> 018U: They are hairy. This one [a kangaroo] is showing his tongue, and that one is jumping. They are unpleasant to look at. Children like beautiful images. I find it unpleasant to look at them. I would not recommend this book.
>
> This book is unpleasant for children too. (011U)
>
> I would not recommend this book just because the images are very unpleasant. I mean, I find them unpleasant… As for the kids… Perhaps, I would not recommend this book to them. (004U)

4.5.2.3. Child-friendly illustrations

If the illustrations were perceived as *child-friendly*, the presence of violence in the book was often mitigated. The major marker of a *child-friendly* book was the use of colour. Intense, vivid, light and bright colours in the illustrations were perceived as beautiful and *child-friendly* by Australian and Ukrainian gatekeepers. The participants said:

> I think this could, certainly, come into a primary school. I think the colours soften it as well. (030A)
>
> Some kids would think that was a pretty picture because it is so colourful and bright. (020A)
>
> Because this tale is aimed at young children, the colours should be vivid. (003U)
>
> Nowadays, children do not choose old books, I mean books with old, grey and faded illustrations. A child would rather choose a bright book. We might think the [old] book is more interesting, but the child will still go for more vivid illustrations. (001U)

Vivid, bright and light illustrations were seen as child-friendly even if some controversial themes were present in the books. This became evident when *Blossom Possum* (2006) was considered. As stated previously, the majority of Ukrainian participants

thought that the fight scene in this picturebook was ugly and unpleasant. Despite this, they perceived the illustrations as *child-friendly* due to the colours used on the book's cover and other illustrations. They said:

> Looking at the illustrations, the book can be recommended to younger readers. (007U)

> Judging the illustrations, this book is for young children. (017U)

> I prefer illustrations like this [pointing at *Blossom Possum* (2006)]: with fluffy animals, with vivid and intense colours. The other books you are showing me are kind of greyish and beige. I prefer the brighter and more child-friendly illustrations. (003U)

Even if the illustrations were considered child-friendly, but the representation of violence in the text was seen as inappropriate, participants were unlikely to recommend such a book to the children. For example, 007U said about *Not Now, Bernard* (1980), "The illustrations, the size of the images and the appearance of the main character look like a book for young children at first glance, but I know it will be psychologically difficult for children to read this text". A monster eating a child was culturally unacceptable for Ukrainian participants; therefore, the colours of the illustrations did not influence their decisions about the book.

In some cases, however, colour was claimed to be used effectively to communicate uncomfortable truths. For example, 027A commented on the book *Cat on the Island* (2008), "The cleverness of just using that colour… Would I use it in the classroom? I would. Because it's there, and they've got it on the library shelves". This citation showed that the colour palette could be an additional criterion in the decision-making process, often linked to more pragmatic arguments (e.g., the book was already present in the library collection).

Finally, the genre of the story influenced perceptions of visual representations of violence. 005U said about *Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* (2015)*:*

> We can understand, this is the Second World War; but even the images of soldiers can be interpreted in many ways. When a child looks at these illustrations, she or he understands a threat, but the threat is in the past; now these are just shadows. I think this illustration can be used in group discussions and present in public libraries; it is for children who are 5 and older. (005U)

4.5.2.4. Mature illustrations

Unlike child-friendly illustrations, *mature* illustrations had more detail; they usually were dark or faded; often drawn in a naturalistic style. Faces of the main characters in *mature* illustrations would either exhibit negative facial expressions or would be hidden. 020A used the term *mature illustrations* to describe illustrations that were suitable for older children only. Looking at "Ivasyk-Telesyk" (2013), she concluded, "The illustrations are quite mature. So, I wouldn't sit down and read it to the kindergarden class" (020A). Ukrainian participants did not perceive the same illustration as *mature*, possibly, because they were familiar with the story. In addition, 031A said about *The Cat on the Island* (2008), "I think it's not appropriate for younger kids… some of the illustrations are pretty confronting".

The *darkness* of illustrations often impacted participants' decision on whether to recommend a picturebook representing violence to children of a certain age. For example, one Australian participant said she would not read *My Mother's Eyes* (2011) to her 6-year-old grandson because the illustrations were "too dark" (023A). A Ukrainian participant said about *Cat and Rooster*, "In my opinion, there is not enough, not enough vivid colours… I wish the fox was really orange; and I wish the mushroom was redder; I wish the colours were brighter if this book is for children" (003U). The dark and faded colours, therefore, were seen as targeted at older children.

In general, Australian research participants did not favour the use of dark colours in illustrations. Some participants associated dark and mature illustrations with books focused on the Second World War or other military events which took place in Europe. 023A said about *My Dog* (2001), "This looks like a European setting to me. And, therefore, I am psychologically more likely to think that this is going to be a story with more… aimed at an older child, and… more likely to feature more sombre things" (023A). 029A used a similar argument to comment on *My Dog* (2001), "No, even the colours are very grim, aren't they?

Grey and black, and… men with guns" (029A). The visual representation of guns and dark colours increased the age limit for the book. In addition, 023A recalled how she saw a picturebook display at the international conference. Her impression was that "the European ones were very dark. You see Australian, you see British, and they are bright and colourful. Even if there isn't much of that at the beginning of the story, there is at the end. Whereas, European books are dark…" (023A). Picturebooks created by Armin Greder (e.g., *The Great Bear* (2010)), an author who was born in Switzerland and started his career there, were often perceived as *too dark* and not suitable for young children by Australian participants. For example:

> H: Have you ever used...
> 028A: *The Island* [2007]?
> H: Yes, books like *The Island* [2007], or *The Great Bear* [2010] in the classroom.
> 028A: No, I haven't. No. I find that the illustrations are very-very harsh, and the expressions can be a bit frightening.

Other Australian participants agreed that Greder's books were aimed at older readers. 031A said about *The Great Bear* (2010), "To me, the whole book is dark, the whole book is kind of depressing". This brief dialogue demonstrates that a visual language of these dark illustrations might have been culturally alien for some gatekeepers. Gatekeepers did not want children to read books with dark illustrations evoking unpleasant emotions.

In addition to *darkness*, some Australian participants were concerned with the characters' facial expressions. Facial expressions of anger were perceived as *evil* and *menacing*, and the hidden faces were seen as *sinister*. For example, one of the Australian participants said that *The Great Bear* (2010) is not suitable for young children because of "the darkness of the illustrations and the facial expressions and the behaviour of the crowd. It is not aimed at primary school kids, and certainly not at little kids" (020A). In addition, she compared another Australian picturebook about the maltreatment of animals in a circus with *The Great Bear* (2010), saying:

> That [Australian picturebook] was on the same topics: bears and bears in circuses, that was just as tragic, but probably not quite as dark in its colours, in the use of

> colours, and in the evil expressions of the characters. And I know a number of teachers that paired the books together for conversations, probably, from grade 4 upwards. I know a grade 4 teacher who used those books. My feeling was that it would be more appropriate for grade 6 upwards, as a fantastic stimulus in the secondary school (020A).

It can be concluded that 020A perceived colourful books with positive facial expressions as more suitable for young children than picturebooks with dark illustrations depicting negative facial expressions. 030A also thought the illustration in *The Great Bear* (2010) were *menacing* because of the characters' facial expressions. She said, "The drawings here… and this menacing shadow of the bear… and the menacing look in their eyes" (030A). In some cases, a hidden face was also seen as an element of *mature* illustrations. 029A looked at the Ukrainian national folktale representing a fox who carried away a stolen chicken in a sack and said, "There is possibly something sinister about not seeing the face". The fox in the illustration could be seen only from behind, and because the facial expression could not be identified, the character looked *sinister*.

The Ukrainian participants had similar views on dark illustrations. However, the way they measured *darkness* differed. While the Australian participants believed *The Great Bear* (2010), *The Island* (2007) and *My Dog* (2001) were *too dark*, the Ukrainian participants believed that the majority of discussed picturebooks were *too dark*. Curiously, Australian picturebooks such as *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015) and *Waltzing Matilda* (2007) were perceived by the Ukrainian gatekeepers as *too dark* also. For example, they said about *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015):

> Well, this [book] is for older children. I would say, this is for older, for teenagers, because of the illustrations. If this book was to be borrowed by a teenager, I would not dare to recommend a book with an illustration like this. (005U)

> Even though there is not much text, this book is for young adults (12-13-year-olds). This book resembles a documentary. It lacks brightness which is required for younger children. (007U)

In addition to the different perceptions of *darkness* among Ukrainian and Australian participants, there were different interpretations of *darkness* among the Ukrainian participants. For instance, they had polarised opinions about the two very dark book-spreads representing war in *The War That Changed Rondo*. Some said that if a book contained any mature illustrations at all, it was for older children. For example, 018U said, "One could do a better job of telling a story about war. I don't like these black colours at all. Even if the war is represented [visually], there is no need for this red and black. It would be better to make it all brighter. Because when you look at these illustrations, you feel alienation" (018U). Others said that if the majority of illustrations were child-friendly, and violence and darkness were present only on one or two pages, they were likely to recommend the book to children. For example, they said about *The War That Changed Rondo:*

> Before and after [the scene of war], the illustrations are not painted in particularly intense colours, but they are light and bright. I think this is perfect. (005U)

> This looks very colourful, interesting and bright to me. Because it is very colourful overall, these [dark] illustrations have not scared me at all; they are balanced by other illustrations. (019U)

Hence, the colours and facial expressions of the characters were among the main predictors of the children to whom the picturebook would be recommended.

4.5.3. Characteristics of fictional violence in text and illustrations

The research participants often stated that their decisions about appropriateness were based not only on the amount and intensity of violence, but also on the purpose of violence. These features could be attributed to verbal representations, visual representations or both.

4.5.3.1. Peripheral violence

The participants said that they would be likely to discuss picturebooks representing violence with children as long as violence was not the main theme and its place in the story was modest. Violence in picturebooks, therefore, was accepted only if on periphery. Furthermore, Australian and Ukrainian participants said that if a picturebook is discussed in the classroom, the focus of the discussion was supposed to be on something other than violence. For example, 027A explained, "I wouldn't be talking about violence for violence's sake. Violence to me is a part of human behaviour. So, the focus is not on violence" (027A). 026A explained that, to discuss picturebooks representing violence, the teachers would have "a conversation that is larger than the violence in this picture per se". Similarly, 031A commented on *Blossom Possum* (2006), saying, "I don't have a problem with this [illustration], because it's not [about] the violence… So, you call this "the page with violence" [pointing at the illustration with a dingo and two kangaroos], it is not the constant focus". Also, 030A said, "It wouldn't be just about violence. It would be about trickery. And should we always tell the truth? And, you know, you go off at different tangents, don't you? Honesty. Truthfulness".

In the Ukrainian interviews, fictional violence was also perceived as *palatable* if it was not the main theme. For example, the participants expressed the following opinions about violence in fairy tales:

> We would bring readers' attention to the fact that geese rescued him [Ivasyk-Telesyk]; we would not focus on his tribulations. The violence there… If we do not focus on it, it will pass by unnoticed and that's it. Only if we start analysing and interpreting, then we understand how things are. (017U)

> The focus should be on collaboration. The means of achieving the goal are secondary. At the same time, the act of abduction must be condemned. I think the grade 5 students will be able to understand the situation. (014U)

> In some tales, there are acts of violence. But I think children do not focus on them. They look at the plot and anticipate a happy ending, where good triumphs over evil. I would recommend the book for the primary school students. (017U)

> If we talk about this particular tale [“Sirko” (2015)], the cartoon managed to prioritise the themes correctly. There are no explicit victims and there are no explicit perpetrators. Everybody changes their roles very quickly and eagerly there. (005U)

The perception of violence in poetry was similar to fairy tales. If an element of violence was seen as a tool of figurative language, and if the central theme was other than violence, the participants would say they do not see the need to discuss violence in this poem. For example, even though the events in *Yaroslavna’s Lament* (2016) are linked to war and the main character expresses, arguably, suicidal thoughts, it was said that *Yaroslavna’s Lament* (2016) was not a story about violence, it was about tragic romantic love:

> I do not see the theme of violence here. We see black ravens, symbols of death; they are flying over the battlefield covered with the bodies of dead warriors. She is addressing the Sun and asking the Sun to return her husband from war or to burn her, but this is just figurative language to describe the tragedy… The ravens came from war. Their presence is the only piece of news she has about her beloved husband. (008U)

Both Australian and Ukrainian participants believed that the case of suicide in *Waltzing Matilda* (2007) should not be discussed in the classroom. If violence was not the central theme, it could be silenced. They said:

> It’s not like you are bringing it there to advocate for suicide. That would be terrible. Clearly, that would be an issue. But, yes, if you are using it as a means for discussing some of those larger themes at the age-appropriate levels, well, I don’t see why not. (026A)

> Perhaps, it would be better not to draw attention to this, so that the theme could pass unnoticed. [Adults ought] to show children what would happen if he did not die; it would be much better and more meaningful [to keep living] than just end his life without leaving a trace. (009U)

In conclusion, the place of violence within selected picturebooks was important. The participants were more likely to recommend a book if the central theme was other than violence, and if violence was present only in small amount (i.e., in the background). Also, the participants stated they would discuss picturebooks representing violence with children; however, they were likely to focus on other themes and not to mention violence during the book discussion.

4.5.3.2. Explicit and implicit representations of violence

The participants concluded that fictional violence in picturebooks could be tolerated if explicit descriptions of violence were absent. This was often true for the historical narratives featuring war. Implicit representations of war were perceived more like myths and legends than like historical narratives. For example, 019U described the representation of war in *Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* (2015) as "indirect and metaphorical; there is a metaphor of shadows here… A weapon cannot be seen explicitly … It's more like a legend… I think this is a safer way to talk about violence. I think even primary school children (6- to 8-year-olds) could cope with this" (019U). Other participants agreed that because the story had only implicit descriptions of war and not much detail, it was suitable for children aged 6 and above. On the contrary, historical fiction that contained explicit descriptions of the events, characters and settings was perceived as being aimed at older readers.

Explicit representations of war in historical fiction were perceived as appropriate only for children older than 8. However, the suggested age depended on the readers' familiarity with a particular context. The picturebook that generated substantial disagreement on the age limit was *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015). Everybody agreed that the book was targeted for children older than 8; however, some Australian participants said the book could be read by some children who are 8-9 years old, others said by those who are 10-11 years old, and yet others said it is aimed at 14- to 15-year-olds or older. The Ukrainian participants said the book could be read by the children who are 12 to 13; some said that it could be read by 13 or 14-year-olds, and by 14- to 15-year-olds or older. For example, 024A confirmed that the book was present in their junior school library collection targeted at children at the from 8 to 10. 028A mentioned they discussed the book

with 10- to 11-year-olds at one of the library lessons in connection with ANZAC Day. Other Australian research participants said the following:

> That's for older children, that's for adults. That's the great anti-war book, I reckon. For some children, [at the age of] 8 or 9, you could start using picturebooks like that, because it is introducing them to the real things, and the things that they see on the television, you know, war and fighting, and whatever, and trying to put a context around that. I wouldn't think of using it with younger kids at all. (023A)

> I'd prefer that to be read, certainly, in the classroom. I would hope that that would not come into a classroom until probably years 4 or 5 [9- to 10-year-olds] where children have the cognitive skills to think through that situation. (030A)

> It's something that, I think should only be done with year 9 students, so 14-year-olds. Because by the 9th grade, they need to look at what the world has in front of them, and to look at history, and to think more about what's happening and not just: "We're going to shoot people" without thinking about what that means. (027A)

> Probably, that one will be fine in the classroom, if you are reading it to an older age group. Because they need to have some sort of understanding of Sulva Bay, and that it was war time, and all of that… (029A)

> It's a very misinterpreted book. The song was written against the Vietnam War, not World War 1… The whole book was anti- the Vietnam War. But it has been taken and reinterpreted into an ANZAC Day text. And just because of the exposure our kids have to ANZAC Day and everything to do with it… You can, certainly, read it in primary school, like grade 3 upwards, and lots of teachers would read it to 1s and 2s. Though, I, probably, wouldn't… The words are really-really explicit. But it's in a context that our kids are exposed to in so much depth and so often. Like every year we do ANZAC Day. (020A)

The explanation by 020A made it clear why violence in *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015) was perceived differently in Australia and Ukraine. The historical context was more familiar to an Australian than to a Ukrainian because of the exposure to the ANZAC narrative. Ukrainian participants were not immersed in the Australian culture and had not heard this song before, and so perceived the explicit descriptions and visual depictions of violence in the picturebook as disturbing and very controversial. For instance, 019U said that *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015) "can be read by children who study history… I mean, grade 5 or 6 [10- to 12-year-olds]. That's when they might be able to process "how our blood stained the sand and the water" and things like that (019U); she added, however, the text might be too difficult to comprehend and emotionally respond to for children younger than 12. Other Ukrainian participants said:

> Well, perhaps, grade 7 or 8 [12- to 14-year-olds]. Because children younger than that would have too many questions, and too little understanding. Well… of course they have to know; it's history. (015U)

> I think, this is for children who are 14- to 15-year-olds, and not younger than that. (017U)

> Violence here is explicit. Who can we recommend this book to?... Highschool students, year 10-11 [16- to 18-year-olds]. Well, it can be year 9 [14- to 15-years-olds], of course. (016U)

Not only printed text was judged against the criterion of explicit descriptions. The scale of explicitness in illustrations was also taken into account. The participants explained that if a *violent* image was just a small detail in the background or a blurred figure in the foreground, such an image was appropriate. For instance, 027A said about *The War that Changed Rondo*, "Here it's a bit more graphic: the house has been on fire. But it's only a little thing on the bottom [of the page], and it's not big and black. This book would have been harder to cope with, if that had been up there, and all you had was the tanks going this way. You're able to take it further, you're able to look at it". Pointing at the image from *Cat*

on the Island (2008), 027A explained, “It is OK for a kid’s picturebook because they blurred it. That’s just colours…”.

Ukrainian participants preferred illustrations with implicit or absent representations of violence. Some participants preferred picturebooks with zero violence in the illustrations. For example, looking at the Ukrainian tale *Cat and Fox*, 006U said, “It is better not to show illustrations like this to children… [this scene] can be without illustration at all” (006U). Similarly, when 001U saw the fight scene in the Australian tale *Blossom Possum* (2006), she said:

> 001U: Well, you could just describe it. There is no need to show it in pictures. Just to say “boxed his ears” is enough.
> H: Would it be better if there was the text and no image for this scene?
> 001U: Yes, it would.

In addition, 001U gave an example of a Ukrainian picturebook representing war called *Nezlamni Murashi* [*Adamant Ants*] by Larysa Nicoy and explained that this book represented war in an appropriate way because there were no explicit depictions of violence and the theme of death was avoided:

> So, this book does not show explicit violence. It tells the story of war: the anteaters have attacked the anthill and destroyed it. Everything is clear. I think this is a perfect way to represent war in a children’s book. Because even very young children can understand what it means to become homeless. So, the results of ants’ hard work were ruined. There is no need to show violence explicitly… I don’t think death was ever mentioned there either. It is just said that the ants were attacked and their home was destroyed (001U).

By contrast, the Australian participants believed the absence of explicit physical violence combined with the sense of an evil threat might have evoked even greater fear

than a scene representing direct violence, and therefore such a book should not be recommended to children. For instance, 020A commented on *The Girl in Red* by Roberto Innocenti and Aaron Frisch:

> It's a very interesting one. You know it creates the seeds of an evil threat… I actually think, it's more threatening than the physical violence. It's the foreboding and the sense of evil, or threat — that's what makes kids scared. It's like something under the bed, it's not explicitly what it is, and I think that's scarier than something that is explicit violence (020A).

One more example of implicit violence with a threatening image was in *My Dog* (2001). 029A explained, "I think for a child this would be a scary picture: that the adults are leaving the child, and the child is running after them". Indeed, the young reader could easily identify with the protagonist and become anxious or afraid imagining themselves in a similar situation. An uncertain, unpredictable and unclear ending seemed to be too much to bear. Offering the readers omissions and subtle hints about what might have happened, the books left plenty of space for the readers' imagination to complement already frightening images with their own fears. Many Australian participants felt books like these were not appropriate for young readers. At the same time, not all Australian participants agreed. Discussing *Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* (2015), 028A said, "I would say you could possibly show it to the younger audience. It'd not be an issue. Because it's not explicitly showing anything gory…".

To summarise, the Ukrainian participants thought that if a picturebook was aimed at children of all ages, representations of violence should either be absent or implicit. Some Australian participants agreed with their Ukrainian colleagues; however, others thought that even implicit representations of violence might evoke emotional discomfort and therefore should not be shown to very young children.

4.6.3.3. The purpose of violence: justifiable cases

The purpose of fictional violence was seen by the participants as crucial in their decision-making process. The book was perceived to be appropriate only if violence was not

romanticised, not promoted, not glorified and, preferably, condemned. 027A asked, “Why do they have to be so graphic? Is there a reason? If it has to be really graphic, I’d question why it is there and what is the purpose of it?”. Unlike in adult literature where violence might reside for the sake of entertainment or attention grabbing, in CL, violence was expected to serve more sophisticated purposes and to maintain a modest place within the story. For example, referring to the *Waltzing Matilda* (2007), 026A said, “I think we [librarians] are respectful and mindful, and we are not looking to use it for just the sake of glorifying violence, but if we use it to educate — I think there is a difference there”. Similarly, 031A explained, “I don't have a problem with that because it's not promoting violence, necessarily. It’s more an observation of violence and history”. The educational purpose, therefore, was crucial for accepting fictional violence in picturebooks.

The Ukrainian participants agreed with their Australian colleagues that violence in picturebooks should be condemned and not glorified. However, if the picturebook was exploring the theme of war, Ukrainian participants expressed rather polarised views on the matter. For example, some took a pacifistic stand and said, “I think the book should be written in a way that makes it clear: war is bad; one should not go on war. To be friends is right; to love each other is right; to fight is wrong” (002U). Also, they highlighted that in their opinion war must not be glorified, saying, “When it comes to heroes… the people who were killed… those people were killed and I cannot see anything good about it. Although I feel very sad that they died, I do not perceive them as heroes. I just see them as people who died for nothing” (011U). Others expressed their concerns about overtly pacifistic approach at the time of war and said:

> I did not have positive associations with this [*The War that Changed Rondo*]. I understand what this book is about but… I mean there are many adults who think the same way these days [they think you can win the war without fighting]. I don’t think… I am not against this opinion but… I mean, if you support the army, you support violence; but if there will be no army, there will be no Ukraine. Those two thoughts are not linked in this book. (004U)

Some held a patriotic perspective saying, “I think, books like this [*Letters on War* (2015)] should be shown to children because they foster patriotism” (017U). Yet, others

were looking for a middle path that would allow for a compromise between pacifism and patriotism:

> To me this [*The War that Changed Rondo*] is a perfect book for discussing war. In my opinion we should read books like this because of the situation we are living in. The two worst-case scenarios would be either "fanatical patriotism" where all children are standing and performing a Nazi salute or if no one says anything about it [war], pretending that we [civilians and soldiers] are living in two different states, even though we all live under the blue-and-yellow [Ukrainian] flag. This is why [reading this book] is the least traumatic way to create the smallest number of questions… We have this book [in our library] and I use it. Many children have read it. (005U)

Consequently, although everybody agreed that violence should not be glorified in picturebooks, the question of representing war was perceived as complex and nuanced. War was not the only type of violence that generated a range of complex interpretations.

Certain cases where fictional characters were harmed or killed were perceived as bearable if the situation seemed to be just and fair or, in the case of animals, aligned with the laws of nature. However, the idea of justice differed in the two cultural contexts. To begin, when some characters had malicious intentions, violence against them was perceived as punishment for their wrongdoing and not as violence. The picturebook that triggered the most conversations about violence and justice was the Australian tale *Blossom Possum* (2006) where a dingo was trying to eat small animals and was stopped by two kangaroos who attacked him. Australian participants mostly agreed with punishing the dingo for his attempt to eat the Blossom Possum and her friends. The dingo's intention to kill others was perceived as a big enough *misdeed* for which to be punished; and his behaviour was seen as socially unacceptable. For instance, 027A said that the dingo "has just gone against the group, and the group has said, "We've had enough of that, and you know, wake up to it", and boxed his ears". 022A commented on the same story, saying, "he does look a bit unhappy but this [scene] is not particularly confronting… What a child would get from there is, "Oh, he was naughty, and he's got his desserts". It would fit in their worldview and so it will not be confronting to them" (022A). 030A explained how she

would discuss the idea of justice in the tale with young children, saying, “If he is going to eat them, then, I would probably be asking my young fellow, my 4-year-old, to come up with his view. “Do you think that's acceptable? Or do you think they're being a bit mean to him? Or has the Dingo, in fact, been very mean here by trying to trick them in the first place?” (030A).

When it came to justice and punishment, the Ukrainian participants disagreed with each other about the purpose of violence in *Blossom Possum* (2006). Some held an opinion similar to their Australian colleagues, thinking that the dingo should be punished; the purpose of violence would be to show that malicious intentions lead to bad outcomes. For example, 019U said, “If we were reading this in a group, we could discuss that the dingo was wrong. He had bad intentions. What were the ways to stop him? Well, he was warned” (019U). However, other participants said that because the dingo is a carnivore, he should not be punished for wanting to eat small rodents, for he has no choice. It would be unfair to punish him for being what he is. The purpose of violence in this case would be to show that the world could be unjust to some individuals. For example, 008U concluded that the dingo was treated unfairly because it was his nature to eat other animals; she said, “He is a *baddy* because he wants to eat and to feed his family. It sounds like a joke” (008U).

The theme of carnivorous animals was very prominent in the Ukrainian interviews. The participants said that fictional violence in picturebooks was justified if the scene portrayed a predator and prey, for this was the law of nature. As a result, Ukrainian participants concluded that animal tales featuring carnivorous animals were demonstrating the complexity of the world and were appropriate for discussing with children. They said:

> The horse is punishing the wolf, but the wolf cannot survive without a horse or a lamb… The wolf will die without them. You know, the coin has two sides. (003U)

> This is natural. There is nothing unnatural here. Everything makes sense. We understand the roles of a wolf and a horse in nature. This situation is highly likely to happen. This is survival of the fittest, after all. It makes sense to show this to a child. (005U)

> This is obvious that Fox wants to eat [Rooster]. (012U)

> Often, a child encounters the world of animals through picturebooks. A fox is a red baddy there because she eats chicken. Well, of course, she does! This is her nature. Only humans can choose [whether to eat meat]. (005U)

> 002U: It depends on a tale. All children eat chicken. They go to a supermarket and buy the chicken; they eat it happily afterwards. If the tale is about a fox who was hungry… Well, he has no chance to buy it, there are no supermarkets in nature, and so the fox is…
> H: …a carnivorous animal.
> 002U: Yes, he eats chicken. There is nothing special about that. But if a hen is described as a picturebook character, if she has her family, her chicks (so, she is basically like a human) then we would interpret the illustration differently.

Furthermore, if an anticipated fictional violence was absent, there was a cognitive dissonance. The Ukrainian participants often believed that children should know the truth and that there is no need to protect them from knowledge about real, authentic and complex reality. For example, one Ukrainian participant said:

> I read a picturebook *Everyone Has a Grandma* by Halyna Pahutiak. I have had some doubts about this book because, in my opinion, this book encourages children to hold unrealistic beliefs. I mean, when a person believes that a cat is a bird's friend and a dog is a cat's friend, they will have a cognitive dissonance after facing the real world and realising that things work differently, and everything is not so straightforward… (004U)

Australian participants perceived situations where carnivores ate herbivores to be palatable too. However, in contrast to the Ukrainian interviews, this argument was used very rarely in the Australian interviews. While the Ukrainians often mentioned wolves, foxes, dogs and dingoes, the Australians mainly talked about cats and dingoes. For example:

> I mean, the cat has got a story too! This is the way cat lives. This is the cat's life. (027A)

> [The dingo] just does what dingoes do naturally: eats other animals. (029A)

Consequently, in scenes where characters followed the laws of nature, and carnivores ate herbivores, this was perceived as non-violent and appropriate for children of any age.

Another theme that often emerged and re-emerged in both Australian and Ukrainian interviews was *self-defence*. This included a narrow definition of self-defence, defending once's life, and its broad definition, defending one's country. The participants would often say that they could not see violence in the discussed scene, because this was a case of self-defence and self-defence is not violence. The appropriateness of the scene where the horse was kicking the wolf was justified by similar arguments in Australia and Ukraine:

> I think, sometimes there is a time when it's OK to defend yourself… Is violence acceptable there? I think that would open up an interesting discussion, but I think most kids would say, "Yes, it is because he's preserving his own life". (030A)

> The horse is trying to… It's using its wits to survive and that's OK… I think younger children can deal with this. There's a lot of messages in it: the messages of being coaxed into something… in a dangerous situation… there's a discussion for sticking up for yourself, I guess. (031A)

> The horse was defending himself. This is a natural thing. (006U)

> If we are talking about our cruel world, we can use this as a metaphor: you have to be able to defend yourself. (005U)

> I have read the tale and I don't think there is anything [inappropriate] here. He survived. He used his wit to survive. (011U)

I remember this tale. I did not like it much. But, overall… you need to look at in a context of self-defence… (004U)

It is a case of self-defence… If in those books [we discussed previously] there are many aspects that are not appropriate today… The self-defence is appropriate even nowadays. (019U)

010U: I don't think there is violence here.
H: Well, see, the horse is kicking the wolf…
010U: Yes, he's kicking. But if he didn't, the wolf would eat him. He defending himself. You know, every child should know how to defend themselves. Perhaps, kicking is not the best way, and other methods should be used. Yes, he kicked him, and the poor wolf… Yes, but every child must be able to protect themselves. Even if their self-defence will be verbal and not physical. Otherwise, others will bully the child.

Consequently, the benefits of teaching children that they should be able to defend themselves in a life-threatening situation outweighed the discomfort of discussing the scenes where the characters may be harmed or injured. Usually, Ukrainian participants believed that the presence of fictional violence is justifiable in the case of self-defence and if the book portrayed fighting one-on-one. For example:

What can we see here? This is a one-on-one situation. This is a counteraction to a physical violence. Fight or flight. If you are able to defend yourself than you should protect your life. So, as for me, this is a normal and adequate illustration, suitable for a child of any age if the child likes fairy tales because this tale teaches that one must protect themself. (008U)

When it comes to "Ivasyk-Telesyk", he put her [a snake-maiden] on the shovel when she was still alive [and burnt her]. Even though she was quite terrible, she was quite evil, there was no need to cook [kill] her like that. On the other hand, this saved his life. (011U)

> This is a fight with a snake-human [dragon]. A human is protecting their life from a monster. I don't see anything horrible here. (008U)

While the Ukrainian participants would often talk about one-on-one cases of self-defence, Australian participants often mentioned situations where characters had to fight as a group to protect their family, village, city or country; all these cases were perceived as appropriate. 031A explained that if "you are, actually, in danger, you have to stick up for yourself: as a person, and as a group" (031A). Commenting of the scene in the Ukrainian legend "Kyrylo Kozhumiaka" (2013), where the hero kills a snake-man, 027A said, "What you are teaching is that you need to be brave and look after the village, and to be a good leader or a good parent as an adult – that's the role for the men [pointing at the illustration]". In a more modern context, representations of soldiers at war were often connected to the idea of *justifiable* violence because the soldiers were protecting their country's citizens and defending their mother land. For example, 027A said, "It's war, and you cannot avoid that… Violence is there, and there is a reason and a purpose. As a teacher, you need to work with it because it's human behaviour" (027A). At the same time, 030A said that if she was discussing picturebooks representing war with students, she "would be talking to them about whether they thought there was ever a situation that this kind of behaviour is justifiable" (030A), suggesting that the status quo of the soldiers could be questioned and implying the pacifist versus patriot dichotomy mentioned earlier.

Despite the overall agreement on the palatability of fictional violence in the case of self-defence among Australian and Ukrainian participants, one crucial difference between two cultures could be seen in interpreting *Blossom Possum* (2006) when two kangaroos beat a dingo to protect the possum and her friends. The Ukrainian participants had conflicting views on whether the discussed scenes of self-defence should be shown to children, and expressed ambiguous feelings about the tale:

> This is a way to protect oneself: self-defence. (003U)

> On the one hand, they clearly protect themselves. However, this illustration shows an explicit cruelty. (008U)

> It is good that this is self-defence; however, they beat him so horribly… … They are almost crucifying the poor dingo… At least, that's how I see it. Well, the fact they are protecting other animals is good. (006U)

> This picture would be scary if one did not know the story… First, the background is dark. Second, the kangaroos look angry and aggressive. I mean, if they had noble faces, the situation would be the same, but… [pause] I don't know. This image simply evokes negative emotions in me. (012U)

One possible explanation for why the Ukrainian participants had ambiguous views on this tale could be that, unlike other tales featuring one-on-one fighting, this tale portrayed two animals attacking a single animal; this might have been seen as culturally inappropriate. The other likely explanation is that the Ukrainian participants might associate the visual representations of violence in this scene with the cruel treatment of some peaceful demonstrators in Ukraine. Visually the scene might resemble an event where Ukrainian students were cruelly beaten by police at night in 2013, or an event where peaceful people who protested against injustice were beaten by police during the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 (see the Appendices). Comparing the discussed illustration from *Blossom Possum* (2006) and famous photographs from the Revolution of Dignity demonstrates a number of similarities: the background is very dark, as the beating often happened at night; both kangaroos and the policemen were expected to protect others; however, they exhibited cruelty and mercilessness. Furthermore, in both cases, there was one victim and two or more attackers. In 2014, there were cases when some policemen would grab one person at a time, drag them outside of the crowd and then beat them. This was often documented in photos and video-footage and then shown to Ukrainian citizens online and in the news. The Australian research participants who might not have a similar collective memory, perceived the illustrations as appropriate and did not see violence, cruelty or ambiguity in them.

To summarise, the participants often linked violence to justice in the discussed picturebooks. If the behaviour of one of the characters was seen as socially unacceptable (e.g., a character threatened the safety of a group), it was believed that such a behaviour

should be punished, and violence was justified. At the same time, if the potentially violent behaviour of a fictional character was aimed at defending the group (e.g., soldiers at war) or perceived as acceptable (carnivorous animals), such violence was justified and was claimed to be worth discussing. Therefore, the intentions of the main characters played significant role.

4.5.3.4. Gratuitous violence: crossing the red lines of appropriateness

In some cases, representations of violence seemed to serve a certain purpose in the story, while in others, violence appeared to be unnecessary and *gratuitous*. Commenting on the picturebook *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015), 027A said, “That to me is violence for violence’s sake. That’s the only violence that should not be there” (027A). The comment suggested that if violence was depicted in the book for no good reason, such a representation would not be appropriate for a picturebook. Similarly, 024A agreed that “there are lots of ways you can use violence, but violence for violence’s sake is no help to anyone” (024A). This comment suggested that some representations of violence might be used for educational purposes; however, all the parties (authors, teachers, parents and young readers) should have a clear understanding of why violence was present.

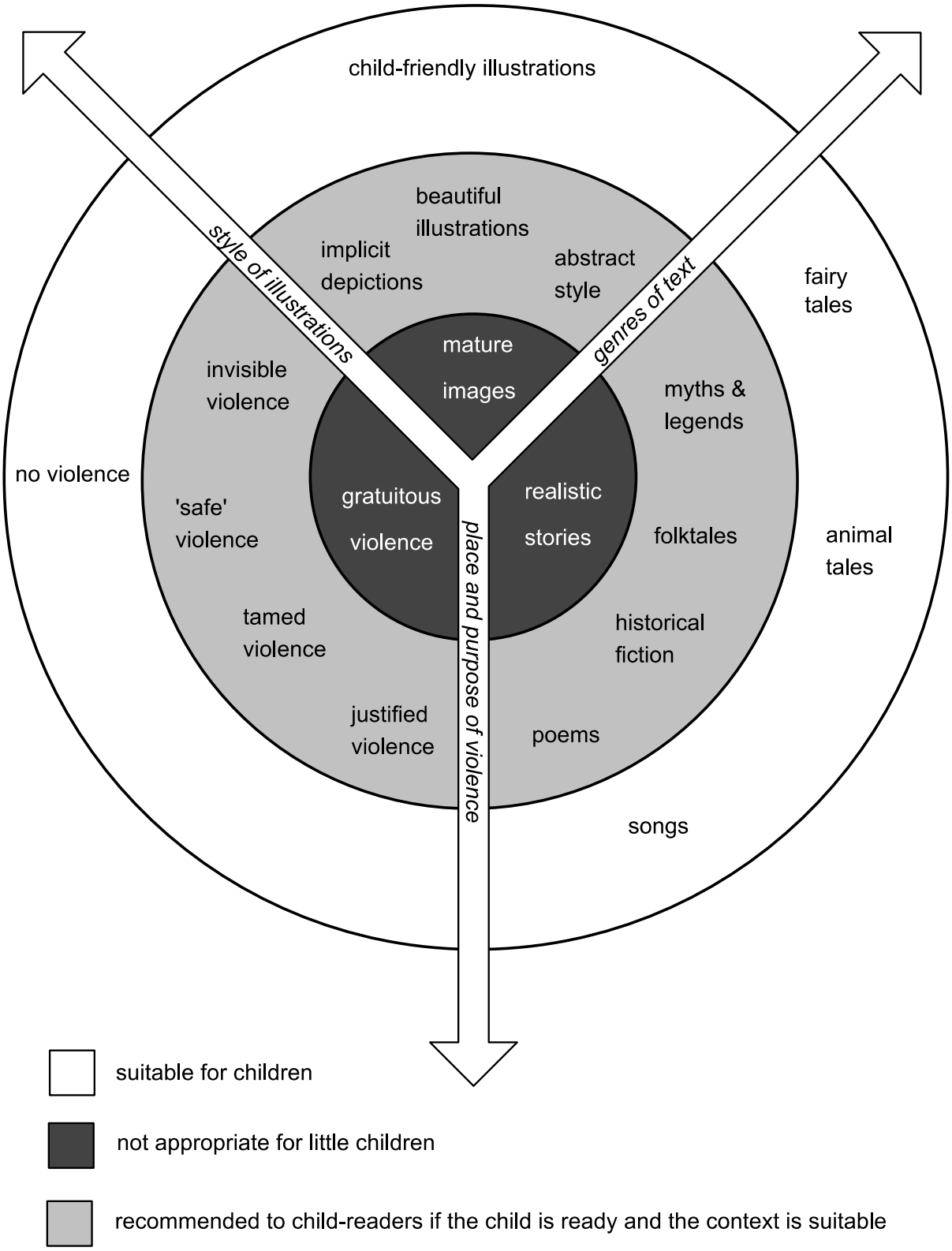
Furthermore, if the purpose of violence was just to shock, the appropriateness of the book would be questioned. 020A admitted, “I have a thing about needless or senseless violence, so when violence has been added just to add impact, or to catch attention, and it is not actually relevant to the story” (020A). She explained that if a fight, a murder or other violent event was present in a picturebooks, there must be a reason and “a purpose for being that graphic” (020A). Simply drawing the reader’s attention was not seen as a sufficient reason.

Meaningless and *gratuitous* violence was considered highly inappropriate in books for children. 023A said, “Where I find... [the picturebooks inappropriate] is when there's no resolution or where the violence is just a continual violence, gratuitous violence, and if you can't see any end in sight. And that to me is definitely adult’s stuff” (023A). The idea of understanding the role and purpose of violence in a book was further elaborated by 024A who asked, “Is it done to shock or to demonstrate some other emotion?” (024A). In addition to just catching the reader’s attention and shocking the reader, simply entertaining the

reader was perceived as an insufficient reason to have violence in a book too. 026A explained, “Some of those really violent graphic novels that are about, you know, superheroes and other things which... Yes, there is a purpose, it is moving the story along, but for younger ages it is not appropriate because there is no underlying lesson there” (026A). Consequently, having violence in words and pictures just to entertain the reader while not providing any moral lesson was seen as inappropriate in picturebooks aimed at young readers.

Figure 10

Features of Picturebooks Representing Violence according to CL Gatekeepers



4.5.4. Conclusions: fictional violence in picturebooks

This section explored picturebook features that the Australian and Ukrainian participants considered when judging fictional violence in picturebooks. It was clear that the participants

linked text appropriateness to levels of fictionality. If the genre, characters and settings were seen as fictional, fantastic or simply unrealistic, violence was perceived as *safe*. If the events, characters and settings were portrayed in a realistic manner, fictional violence was not seen as appropriate for young children. The participants also had certain expectations of book illustrations. Those painted in bright, light, vivid colours or in a more abstract style were seen as child-friendly; whereas, dark faded illustrations where characters had either hidden faces or negative face expressions were seen as *mature* illustrations. Usually, fictional violence was perceived as more palatable in child-friendly illustrations.

The amount, intensity, explicitness and purpose of violence played roles too. It was agreed that fictional violence could remain in books if there were other central themes and if violence was *silenced* in the process of reading the book. Fictional violence was also perceived as bearable if the representations were implicit and violence rather than glorified. In addition, fictional violence could be *justifiable* or *righteous* if its educational purpose was clear, and the characters adhered to socially appropriate behaviour. For example, fictional violence was seen as *righteous* if performed by carnivorous animals who wanted to feed their family, or by characters who were protecting their own lives, or by warriors and soldiers defending their land. Finally, if the purpose of violence in the story was unclear, or if the only purpose was to entertain or shock readers, such fictional violence was claimed to be *gratuitous*.

4.6. The contextual dimension

This section describes how the context surrounding picturebooks representing violence influenced decisions about appropriateness. It explored three different aspects: cultural context, personal context, and media and institutional context. The cultural context focuses on the impact of culture, tradition and folklore on gatekeepers' perceptions of books. The personal context examines how familiarity of and relatability to the context encourages or discourages gatekeepers from recommending books. Finally, the context shaped by media, educational institutions and the general public shows how the printed and spoken information about a picturebook influences gatekeeper opinions about the book's appropriateness. Here, the Australian and Ukrainian media and institutional contexts are examined separately.

4.6.1. Cultural context

Violence in songs and traditional stories was often perceived as palatable because these narratives were seen as a part of a particular culture, and violence in them was interpreted as an inseparable element of folklore. Australian participants would say that the discussed stories and illustrations were appropriate "because it is a part of a culture" (026A), because "that reflects the culture of that time" (022A) and because "this is Australia. This is the picture people have in Australia" (027A). Similarly, the Ukrainian participants regularly mentioned culture to justify their selection of books. They said, "It all depends on culture… if a child is used to this…" (004U) and "Personally, I do not interpret this tale ["Sirko" (2015)] as violence. We read it [as children], we saw the cartoon. Because of this experience, because of our culture, there is nothing scary in this tale… But, of course, one should read the entire story to understand the context" (009U). Therefore, if a story and images in a picturebook were closely related to well-known narratives, participants were more likely to approve them.

In the interviews, it was clear that if representations of violence were very familiar to participants, violence could become hardly noticeable. The invisibility of violence in culturally accepted stories was apparent in discussions of the illustrated version of the song *Waltzing Matilda*, which is, arguably, a significant artefact of Australian culture. 020A said, "We sing it, and we all know it" and "I would use it with younger children, but I would want to be a part of the conversation because it's part of our national heritage" (020A). 025A agreed that the song has been perceived as an *anthem*, saying, "That's almost like a national anthem, really" (025A). Also, she elaborated on this, saying, "I don't think that would worry them [children] at all. It is our famous song, and there are lots and lots of books on that" (025A), suggesting that since the song is a part of culture, no one would question its appropriateness. 026A explicitly said, "I think historically this [song] has just been a part of the culture without even people thinking about it" (026A) and "It is just something that is so entrenched in the culture that from an early age people are just... yes it seems like everybody's familiar with that" (026A). After I asked 031A about her opinion on *Waltzing Matilda* (2007) and the suicidal death of the main character, they answered, "I'm kind of a little lost for words on this one because, like I said, we're so used to this song, and we're so

used to the story that we, probably, don't think of it in terms of violence" (031A). Also, she added, "It's a fresh perspective, I have to say. We've so grown up with this song that we almost don't think about it. There's the sensitivity issue, I suppose[9]" (031A). Whereas, the Ukrainian participants, who did not grow up signing the song or being familiar with Australian history and culture, said they would only recommend the book to older children. The majority of Ukrainian gatekeepers said children should be older than 12 to read the book. One of them said about the picturebook:

> 017U: Frankly speaking, this is a horrible story…
> H: Well, it was in the 19th century…
> 017U: Well, it's a horrible story!

Another Ukrainian participant explained, "But when he is sentenced to death and he drowns… This is for older children because the younger psyche will not be able to cope with this… Children will cry. Also, a child might remember those scary episodes… I think this is for grade 9 when children are 14, 15 or 16" (010U). This shows that, unlike Australian participants, who knew the story very well and were likely not to interpret story literally, the Ukrainian participants were unwilling to discuss the story with younger readers.

One more example of surprise related to words of a culturally significant song was offered by 031A who said, "I was in a choir a number of years ago, and we sang the Welsh national anthem. It was the first time I've ever seen the words. I can't even remember what they were, but I remember being absolutely horrified" (031A). This example showed how *invisible* violence became apparent to a person who belonged to a different culture and was not accustomed to a particular narrative.

The illustrated songs and poems were not the only picturebooks where violence seemed invisible and accepted without questioning. The same was true for traditional stories – myths, legends, folk and fairy tales – which were passed on from generation to generation crafting the patchwork of culture. Both Australian and Ukrainian participants

[9] The text does not explicitly say *the man committed suicide*, and as one of the participants explained to me, the swagman could have been hoping to jump into a billabong as a way to escape the police without realising he would die. However, because the song was created for an adult audience, there was no reason to avoid the case of self-inflicted violence.

explained that they were not shocked or surprised by the selected examples of picturebooks because many stories which could be seen as violent today had been told to children for centuries. This was a long-lasting tradition – the participants from Australia and Ukraine agreed. 026A said, “When I was a child, they used to use Aesop’s fables”. 023A expressed similar thought, saying, “I grew up with this kind of staff, and I made sure my children had, you know, fairy tales and Aesop’s fables”. In addition, 018U explained, “Grandmas read and tell folktales to children because they remember them [from their grandmother’s stories]” (018U). 019U said, “It is difficult for me to judge this folktale in isolation from our culture. *The Tale about the Cat and the Rooster* was read to me countless times [when I was a child]. The scene [of abduction] has never evoked any…” (019U). Therefore, Australian and Ukrainian interviewees perceived traditional stories as appropriate to read to children because they read them themselves when they were children.

The participants from both countries believed that belonging to folklore could justify some elements of violence in a story. It was claimed that these stories had stood the test of time. The participants said:

> I think it’s very important to discuss legends, stories that have been handed down for generations … I think, it’s essential [that] the tradition continues. (028A)

> Since these are [Ukrainian] folktales, everybody reads them. (006U)

> This [fairy tale] can be read by anyone. Any culture could know this. We also have many scary things [in Ukrainian fairy tales]. (018U)

> I think children should read fairy tales, of course, with the right interpretation. (007U)

Each tale was seen as a type of the story deeply rooted into a national folklore, not as a unique entity. The participants would often compare the discussed fairy tales with fairy tales with which they were familiar (even though I never asked them to make such comparisons). For example, 031A said, “It’s kind of based loosely on the story about *Chicken Licken*, isn’t it?”. Likewise, 028A looked at the illustrations of the contemporary Ukrainian

picturebook representing war and said, “It, sort of, reminds me of *Sleeping Beauty* and the thorns, like the castle”. Moreover, the similarity with other stories including violence would make violence *normalised* and *palatable* in the eyes of participants. For example, 025A explained that the part of the tale where a snake-maiden was baked alive (allowing the main character to escape) would not impact young readers much, saying: “It wouldn't affect them at 4 or 5 or 6 or 7. I don’t think so because… As you started, I thought, “Oh, I don't think I'd tell that”, but it's actually very similar to pushing the witch to save Hansel and Gretel. Yes, it is very, very much along the same line”. Another participant who heard the same story concluded, “OK. Like *Hansel and Gretel*. Lovely! … See, that’s the same as *Hansel and Gretel* and those sorts of things” (027A). Apparently, if the same violent event reoccurred in many tales, it was perceived as normalised.

The noticeable difference between Ukrainian and Australian responses lay in the perceived *invisibility* of violence. The Ukrainian participants believed that violence in traditional stories was hardly noticeable or *invisible* to children and adults and therefore the stories were *safe* to read. They said:

> Our tales differ from theirs [Australian]… I don’t understand them [the Australian tales]. Our tales teach people how to survive, they teach people how to be sharp [sly and clever]. I do not perceive our [Ukrainian] tales as those that contain aggression or violence. (011U)

> These are our tales. We grew up reading them. I don’t see any violence in them. The wolf must know its place. Children can read them. In my opinion, there is nothing [inappropriate] in the tale. (013U)

> Of course, we could have a long discussion about violent elements in fairy tales, like an attempt to eat Ivasyk-Telesyk. We just don’t think too much about these elements; we create other associations with the fairy tales. (014U)

> We read them when we were growing up and we read them to our children. Clearly, we did not think this was violence. (018U)

Those who were read traditional stories as children were likely to read them to their children. Also, children did not notice the presence of violence until they were told that the scene was violent by adults. Yet, the overarching message was that traditional stories must be read not because of violence, but despite the presence of violence in them, because their *safety* had been *tested* over many generations.

The only exception among the Ukrainian responses was an opinion expressed by 002U who said, "Recently, I have noticed that there is a lot of violence in Ukrainian folktales. There is death, one gobbled another, one hit the other and killed them… My colleagues and I talked about this and we just couldn't reach an agreement on why this is the case" (002U). This quotation suggested that violence in fairy tales was most likely invisible to 002U until recently. This supported the idea that if violence was represented in traditional stories that were a part of culture, fictional violence was invisible to the majority of members of the culture.

Although the Australian participants agreed that the traditional stories had been shared with children for many years and became an important part of culture, the invisibility of violence in traditional stories was often questioned. For example, 023A said, "I suspect that there is a group of people who would be shocked by this story, because they haven't read it [as children]" (023A). Furthermore, 031A challenged the widespread fascination with old traditional stories saying, "On the one hand, because of the tradition, they've been around for hundreds of years and everybody grows up learning them; somehow we should promote them with children. On the other hand, I'm thinking, "This is really quite ghastly!" [laughing], so if… I don't think I, personally, would promote this to a child" (031A). 022A added that the story, which could be easily accepted within one culture, might not be seen as appropriate in the other culture. Therefore, the *invisibility* of violence depended on how deeply the story was rooted into the culture. He explained, "In Eastern Europe, you've got things like Grimm's fairy stories. And the originals are grim, like they are dark. And you've got a tradition in Northern Europe of dark stories… They understood that there is evil in the world, there are dark things in the world, and you have to be ready for it. Our culture doesn't do dark very well, you know". Consequently, not all Australian participants agreed that violence in traditional stories was invisible. The comparison of Ukrainian and Australian responses showed that the invisibility of violence in traditional stories should be seen as a continuum with *almost invisible*, *hardly noticeable* and *safe* fictional violence on one side,

surprising, *disturbing*, *striking*, and *ghastly* on the other, and many others in between. Also, it became clear that when an adult encountered a traditional story from another culture, violence became visible.

There was some disagreement between parents, teachers and librarians about whether young children should read fairy tales. The gatekeepers from both countries saw some educational value in discussing traditional stories even if they represented violence; however, they also mentioned that parents did not always shared these views:

> Most of the parents want sanitised fairy tales, you know, with happy endings. But if you gave them the original Grimm's tales or some of the Hans Christian Andersen's ones... they want the Disney version. Not the real version that shows that, you know, half of the time, *Little Girl with Matches* did die and that sort of thing. They wouldn't like it. (023A)

> Nowadays, parent see a lot of violence in fairy tales. They are against violence and they do not want their children to read fairy tales that promote violence. However, I believe fairy tales are full of folk wisdom; they were developed over decades and centuries. (007U)

Furthermore, the data showed that teachers and librarians from Australia were likely to treat fairy tales with caution. Because they were aware that parents were dissatisfied with their children reading traditional stories, their decision-making might have been influenced by this. Alternatively, the Ukrainian teachers and librarians mostly agreed that because fairy tales were a deeply ingrained part of Ukrainian culture, folklore and tradition, they were safe to read to children.

4.6.2. Personal context

Picturebooks representing violence were seen as suitable for children if the described context was relatable or familiar to a child reader. 027A said, "It has to be relevant, it has to suit the context of the reader". 022A added, "All stories are written for the generation. That is why each new generation needs new stories", meaning that the context of the story

should be familiar. 028A commented on the example of *Blossom Possum* (2006), saying, “I think this is something children could relate to because they probably have inflicted violence on another child or another person previously. Yes, it’s really not nice to think about it, is it?” Similarly, 020A said the picturebook “could certainly be used in the primarily school. It has a context, and a context that our students can connect to”. The Ukrainian participants highlighted the important of context too, as they said, “We should always pay attention to the context” (008U) and “The context is crucial here” (009U). Therefore, the familiar context of the story was perceived as one criterion for judging picturebooks representing violence.

Moreover, the Australian participants believed that if children could relate their life experiences to the fictional violence in a picturebook, this might have a therapeutic effect on children. 031A said, “Children do often experience these horrible things. For those children, I would say that there would be picturebooks that are both relevant and, hopefully, helpful to them that I wouldn’t show to other children of the same age” (031A). 025A mentioned that children could gain a sense of agency if they could relate to confronting events and believe they could make a difference. She said, “The children will relate to that very much because that is the sort of thing [singing] they would hope that they could do. They could change things by singing with friends, by doing something, by giving and all of those sorts of things. So, they would be very intent listening to that story” (025A). Therefore, it was believed that the relatability of the story was a positive trait for a fiction depicting violence but which had a happy ending.

The Ukrainian participants had slightly different views on the matter. Instead of judging whether readers can relate to the context, they were mostly preoccupied with whether readers could identify with the characters and therefore relate to the story. An example was given by 014U. She referred to the illustrated short story *Fedko-Khalamydnyk* (1906) by Volodymyr Vynnychenko to explain how children relate to the story. Clearly, the context was foreign to them; nevertheless, according to 014U, they managed to relate:

H: How do children respond to the fact that Fedko died?

014U: They cry.

H: Do they?

014U: Yes, they cry, because they feel compassion toward Fedko. They are the same age as the main character. They imagine that this could happen to them, or their classmate, or their friend. They are very emotional and oversensitive. Literally, half of the class cries. I really liked how one boy said once, “Let’s not read the ending aloud. Let’s just skip it”. I said, “Sure, let’s skip it” because I knew they have read it at home anyway.

The relatability to the story was perceived as desirable in most cases. At the same time, it was clear that some stories were less relatable than others. If the picturebook represented events children could not relate to (e.g., 19th century everyday life or war in a foreign country), children could still relate to the characters.

Apart from *relatability* to violence, the participants also talked about *familiarity* with the context. The example of war was the most prominent for exploring the participants’ perceptions of familiarity. *Familiarity* was understood in a broad sense (e.g., readers learnt about war from history lessons) or in a narrow sense (e.g., readers were affected by war). This is why there were significant differences in the Australian and the Ukrainian perceptions of picturebooks about war.

In Australia, the argument was: children would not be shocked or surprised to see representations of war in a picturebook because *war* was a familiar concept. War was perceived as a concept known from history lessons, history-textbooks and because of the regular First World War commemorations. 020A said about *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015), “The words are really-really explicit. But it’s in a context that our kids are exposed to in so much depth and so often. Like every year we do ANZAC Day”. Hence, the picturebook representing Gallipoli was perceived as a part of larger discourse including annual commemorations, films, songs, history textbooks, and others. Discussing the legend where the main character was commemorated after his death, 025A said, “That would be something that they [the children] would relate to, such as things like our commemoration services (which all children have from 3 or 4 and older). They know that heroes, warriors are commemorated and remembered” (025A). Consequently, if a picturebook depicted well-known historical events, the representation of violence in the story was seen as familiar. 028A pointed out that children from countries with no military conflicts were still aware of war; she said, “I guess, children from the age when they come to school, they already know

that the war happens, and particularly boys (you know, with the toy figurine army soldier). They are aware of shooting and tanks, and all sorts of things. They tend to have a fascination with the army and war, and it doesn't necessarily show anything gory" (028A).

The decision-making process about books representing war was complex: both risks and benefits were estimated simultaneously. Usually, the topic was seen as too difficult to digest by primary school students; therefore, it was thought many war picturebooks were not appropriate for younger children. For example, 026A said about *The War that Changed Rondo*, "I think in the school context, I'd probably be very careful with how to use something like this. I don't know whether they'd have it available to the primary students. Just because it is… it is dealing with the topic like war. And even though it seems that parts of the illustrations are quite colourful, it's still a very difficult topic" (026A). When I asked the participants about parental perspectives, outside of the school context, the response was similar. For instance, I asked 023A if parents ever complained about any picturebooks in the bookstore. She told me that picturebooks on war would generate many complaints; however, she added, "They would complain… if the story was about the Holocaust, if the story was about the bombing of children in war. But their focus was extremely narrow. Whereas some of the books about refugees are even more harrowing, really" (023A). This quote showed that war was a topic that teachers nor librarians, nor parents wanted to discuss with children.

The majority of Australian participants tended to take a rather cautious position when it came to reading books about war. For example, 031A said, "At some point, it's important for all Australians to understand the [military] conflicts that other people in the world face, for sure. I'm not sure that at a particularly early age that's helpful, for an Australian child" (031A) 029A said, "It's quite brutal, isn't it? It's just a depiction of war, that's all it is. [pause] I don't know if I would favour too much of that sort of literature, even at war time" (029A). In contrast, an Australian participant who was born and educated in the USA said that the Australian students "have been very fortunate [not to be] directly impacted by a lot of the complex issues going on in the world… [however] they need to be having those conversations and thinking about things that are going on outside of the bubble" (026A). The views differed because 031A and 029A thought it would be better to avoid discussing the theme of war until children were older, while 026A believed that as long as adults were discussing the topic carefully, children could explore the theme.

The Australian pacifistic attitude toward warfare was often evident in discussions of picturebooks representing war. Looking at the Ukrainian picturebook *Letter on the War*, 020A said, “I probably wouldn’t add it to the library unless a teacher asked me to simply because I couldn’t see how it could be used, or the main purpose. And part of that might be cultural in that we tend to, as a nation, be more pacifists. There would be a lot of parents that would not think soldiers were heroes” (020A). In line with this argument, 031A expressed a similar opinion about books representing war, “Unfortunately, globally, we’ve got young children who actually experience this [war]… But that doesn't mean we need our young children to experience it even visually if they don’t have to” (031A). Both examples demonstrated that in the context of Australian historical experience, the topic of war was sometimes seen as inappropriate for discussion in primary schools by Australian participants who preferred the *protective* approach and tended to have a pacifistic worldview.

In Ukrainian interviews, war was perceived as a mostly familiar concept too. However, instead of referring to World War One or World War Two, the Ukrainian participants were more likely to refer to the current war in the East of Ukraine. When children saw representations of war in a picturebook, the argument was, the children would not be surprised, because, unfortunately, the concept of war had become familiar after the military conflict with Russia began in 2014.

The Ukrainian participants had polarised views on whether young Ukrainian readers should be recommended picturebooks representing war. Some participants said that children already knew that war existed. Therefore, they perceived discussions of picturebooks representing war as an opportunity to explain to children what war was. Also, they believed the truth should not be hidden from children because they would learn about war any way. For example, 015U said that *The War that Changed Rondo* can be recommended “to upper-primary school. Here, everything is clear. Nowadays, when we have the war in the East of Ukraine, children understand all the consequences of war. They watch TV. They watch the news. Sometimes, adults do not even realise how much primary school children know about the war. So, they have to know. We cannot escape reality” (015U). In addition, 003U said, “Only babies do not know what war is. Also, very old people might ignore war because they choose to self-isolate. I think we must educate children [about war] and show them [picturebooks about war]” (003U). The participants believed

that Ukrainian children had the right to know about war at any age because the concept had been familiar to them. They said:

> I think this picturebook [*Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* (2015)] can be read by anyone, especially, nowadays. Today, we perceive it, well, I would not say in a positive way, but with understanding. It [war] is understood in a kindergarten and in school. This [book theme] shifts from negative to positive. Also, the illustration is fine. (018U)

> I don't know how it is in Australia, but we are living in the reality of war. I think, yes [children should read picturebooks about war]: about the Second World War, and about our war in the East of Ukraine. Children should know. You see, it's like telling children that bread does not exist, or milk does not exist… I think they should know. This is life. (003U)

At the same time, it was believed that not all Ukrainian children were aware of the war. The teachers and librarians often felt uncomfortable discussing the theme of war with children because they did not know how parents explained the current Ukrainian events to them, and if the parents allowed children to learn about those events at all. For example, 010U said, "I think, perhaps, when children are 11 or 12 and older, they can understand books about war. It is important to explain to children what war this was; first, parents should do this at home; then, librarians can offer a discussion in the library to explain that war is something bad" (010U). In addition, 013U said:

> This [*Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* (2015)] can be read by children in grade 5 or 6 [11-, 12- or 13-year-olds] because younger children do not understand war yet. They have been living in their own world. Their parents have been protecting them. The world out there is a foreign domain for them; they only see what is happening at home and at school. At home, they are protected by parents; at school, they are protected by teachers. This is more suitable for grade 5 or 6 (013U).

Furthermore, some Ukrainian participants thought that precisely because children knew about the war in the East of Ukraine, they should not read picturebooks exploring the

theme of war because they might find them upsetting. 011U said, “Children are a part of society, they hear the word *war* on TV and in conversations… Frankly speaking, if it is about war, I don’t think children should read it. I think they should just be aware that war is a horror” (011U). This idea corresponded with the concept of *troubled* readers. Also, some participants explained that they did not feel ready to explain the theme to children in the most helpful way. 019U said:

> When it comes to war… [I remember] I was teaching grade 2 when this book [*The War that Changed Rondo*] was published and when the war [in Ukraine] began. I did not want to [discuss this book with children]… because if you talk about war in a country where there is peace, this is one story, but if you discuss the same book in a country where there is war… You know, at the time, this was a hot phase of the war; someone lost their dad at war… I avoided discussing topics like this and I did not use this book in the classroom because this was a very traumatising time. I think for countries that are not in a state of war, this book is safe. Because the dark cloud goes away. Yes, the city is partially destroyed, but it is also rebuilt. There is nothing overtly tragic in this book. (019U)

In addition, 009U explained, “We used to recommend this book [*The War that Changed Rondo*] to 7-year-olds. However, nowadays, it seems to be more suitable for 9- to 10-year-olds. These days, they are mature enough in that age” (009U). Consequently, although in some cases the Ukrainian participants believed children should read and discuss picturebooks about war, in other cases, the age for recommending books about war increased after the beginning of war in Ukraine in 2014.

4.6.3. Media and institutional context

In addition to being impacted by culture, gatekeeper decisions were influenced by media and institutional context. The impactful institutions, types of policies and public opinion influencers differed in Australia and Ukraine. In Australia, participants often said their willingness to use picturebooks representing violence with children depended on book reviews, interviews with picturebook author and school policies. In Ukraine, participants

also mentioned book reviews; however, they were more likely to be guided by the school curriculum, and public and parental opinion about the book when deciding whether they should recommend a book to children. Also, the Ukrainian teachers and librarians often felt the ultimate responsibility for deciding to read a given picturebook was on parents and children themselves.

4.6.3.1. Gatekeepers' expectations of certain authors and publishers in Australia

Participant expectations of picturebooks were often influenced by the authors. It was believed that authors and illustrators tended to create picturebooks of the same type: if previous books featured controversial or complex topics, their other publications were expected to be similarly controversial. For instance, 020A said, "Anthony Browne's books, I think, are targeting a slightly older audience", referring to the fact that Browne's picturebooks often explore gender inequality and domestic violence. Also, 023A looked at *My Dog* (2001) and said, "I'm biased because I have read John Heffernan before". When I asked her if she expected themes like that to be present, she replied, "Yes, because of the author" (023A).

It was clear that gatekeepers associated certain authors and illustrators with complex and nuanced themes, mature illustrations and less child-friendly representations. Among them were Armin Greder, Mark Wilson and Shaun Tan. Australian participants explained that these author's and illustrator's picturebooks were simply aimed at older audiences (teenagers and adults), and the possible reason the books might have been in primary school library collections was that picturebooks were often not treated seriously. For example, 020A said about *The Great Bear* (2010), "It's just not written for children. As I'm sure it was written and illustrated as a personal expression by the author and the illustrator" (020A). Similarly, 023A looked at *The Great Bear* [2010] and said, "This gentleman who wrote *The Mediterranean* [2018]… It is dark, very very dark … whenever I see his books I think, "It's going to be dark in theme"" (023A). Clearly, the experienced librarians and teachers expected Armin Greder's picturebooks to include dark and grim representations.

In addition to Armin Greder, Mark Wilson was perceived as an author of picturebooks for older children. 020A said about him, "Ah, Mark Wilson! I've got his books

listed as *Senior picturebooks*… open to pretty much grade 5 upwards. But younger kids who would come to me, I would let them borrow either one of those [pointing at the discussed picturebooks], probably. This guy is brilliant" (020A). The recommended age was grade 5 upwards; however, the age limit was soft. 023A also perceived Mark Wilson as an author for older children. She said that *My Mother's Eyes* (2011) would be a great read for middle school and secondary school because of the author and her expectations based on his previous picturebooks.

One more Australian author of clever and controversial picturebooks often mentioned in the interviews was Shaun Tan. 020A believed that Shaun Tan's books are sometimes misunderstood; she explained that his picturebooks "deal with depression and loneliness, death and those sorts of things. And they are usually just put into a primary school collection without a lot of thought" (020A). When I asked why she thought teachers were so keen to use Tan's books, but not books by other authors on similar topics, 020A replied, "There is, usually, teacher resource kits that are developed and put out there as well. So often the book [written by an author like Tan] comes with an enormous ready to use teaching package to go with it, and, you know, teachers are aware of these authors" (020A). As an English teacher with many years of experience, 027A confirmed that they often used Tan's books in the classroom despite the difficult topics he wrote about. The primary reason was the *cleverness* of representations. 027A explained:

> Tan was very popular, and very effective, and very clever. So, he was a superb person to have there for kids in the classroom. You could do so much with so little. So, I guess, we were quite open to have him. And, to have Marsden and Tan together was good. In fact, it had been done so cleverly, that invasion story. (027A)

The discussed examples of three Australian authors showed the continuum of opinions with *appropriate* on one side and *inappropriate* on the other. While Greder's books were perceived as mostly for older children, Wilson's books were mostly recommended for teenagers, but sometimes suitable for children, and Tan's picturebooks were seen as clever enough (and, perhaps, colourful enough) to be read by readers of any age, despite representing difficult topics.

4.6.3.2. Parental guardianship in Australia

While decisions about picturebook selection would be mostly made by teachers and librarians, decisions about enabling children to read those books could be influenced by teachers, librarians and parents. In fact, if a book was controversial, the teachers and librarians might seek parental approval before giving or discussing it with a child. The Australian participants gave several examples of situations where they shared the responsibility with parents:

> Sometimes the child would insist. And if we really had concerns, then what we decided (because I worked as a part of the team, of course, with the teacher librarian) was, "Look, I don't think I can let you borrow that, but if you want… If you think your mum's OK with that (or dad) I need them to write me a note, and say you are allowed to borrow it. When I get the note, I'll let you to take it home". But I didn't have too many of these situations. (031A)

> Parents reading to their children, hopefully, will be very aware of what's going to be appropriate for their own child. (031A)

> As a librarian, well, you've got certain responsibilities, but you still can never override the parent. (031A)

> You would, maybe, even ask parents' permission to share that with them. (025A)

> We used to start classes in year 7 and sometimes in year 8 with silence so they could read. There was one time when I objected, I couldn't… The child was reading the book of somebody who had killed someone and went to jail, here in Tasmania. And then all these media outlets started writing these stories, and that child was reading this. So, I said my views, but I did not say: "You cannot read it", because that came from home. (027A)

These examples demonstrated that even though decisions about which books to select and purchase for library collections were made by teachers and librarians, decisions about which books to give children were a joint responsibility of teachers, librarians and parents. Furthermore, parental approval was perceived as more significant than opinions of a teacher or librarian. The research participants described several cases where parents requested that certain books were not shown to their children.

Upset or angry parents were another common concern. The teachers and librarians were aware that if children were at risk of becoming upset or worried, this would trigger an emotional response by their parents. 020A said, “Some parents do get upset when the kid comes up with a book and says: “Look, I was reading this book and got to the end, and look, my God, he’s dead!” Yes, that’s a bit hard, you know”. In addition, 031A mentioned a case when parents were upset with the topic and deeply unsatisfied with the teacher’s choice of the book and the treatment of the subject. This led to the parental decision to remove the child from that school:

> 031A: Oh! I’ve had conversations with other parents, actually. And not just about things like suicide, things like *rape*.
> H: Yes, there are lots of these [in teenage novels].
> 031A: That is a violent act, and to subject somebody to reading about that, particularly with… I mean, I’ve heard a very concerning slant about a piece of literature one teacher made. And as a result of it… She assigned the book to be read, and then the assignment she gave to students was really concerning… I mean, a parent related this to me…
> H: And what did the parent say? How did they react?
> 031A: They objected, and I think they ended up taking their child out of that school as a matter of fact.
> H: Oh, really?
> 031A: And they had to find another school because they couldn't reach… They didn’t feel… They went to the teacher first.
> H: Yes.
> 031A: And they didn't have satisfaction with the… like, obviously, there were very different ideas about that.

This example of parental guardianship demonstrated that children's emotional responses to books could have serious consequences, and that the ability to reach a compromise between parents and teachers could lead to decisions beyond the English classroom. For this reason, teachers would attempt to avoid upsetting both children and parents. Consequently, teachers and librarians may have decided not to recommend certain picturebooks representing violence to very young children to avoid a possibly backlash.

4.6.3.3. Alignment of a book with school policy in Australia

Decisions on the appropriateness of a picturebook for children could be made by individual adults such as parents, teachers and librarians. However, they could be also made collegially by staff members at a given school, or by a professional network consisting of teachers and librarians from different institutions. Although this research mostly focused on interpretations of individual teachers and librarians, systemic influences should not be ignored.

School policy would influence decisions of school staff. If senior staff members would not allow the presence of certain books on school premises, a single teacher or a librarian would not be able to do much about it. To summarise the idea, 020A used an example of a picturebook about bath time representing two young naked children. She explained, "As educators we tend to play safe now. So, we don't want to get the flag from senior staff… I know of principals and assistant principals who actually pulled that book off the library shelves in several schools, because the kids were naked" (020A). If the book represented violence, the school could use a similar approach; apparently, both *violence* and *nakedness* fall into the category of *controversial* picturebooks. 020A commented on the fight scene in *Blossom Possum* (2006):

> I know there would be senior teachers, like senior staff in the school that would pull this book based on that picture, because it doesn't align with the anti-bullying and anti-violence policy of the school. I wouldn't. 99% of parents wouldn't blink an eye on it, they would laugh. Because that is what you're meant to do. You're meant to laugh.

> And that's what worries me, we sometimes just take things a bit too seriously. Yes, it would certainly be questioned by a lot of people. (020A)

Australian teachers and librarians participating in this study considered school policy when deciding on book suitability. When asked about the appropriateness of *Waltzing Matilda* (2007) for classroom discussion, 022A said, "Maybe, if I was doing a unit on suicide, which is unlikely, because a lot of schools don't allow that topic to be taught. That's very common. You can't." This suggested that the individual decisions of gatekeepers of CL usually had to align with institutional visions and policies.

In addition to *unwritten* policies, schools and libraries might have policy documents clearly stating how a library collection should be developed; and briefly describe which materials were considered appropriate. The detailed analysis of such policies was beyond the scope of this research; however, one research participant kindly shared their written library development policy with me and commented on it. See the Appendix. 024A explained, "In the centre of this policy, these two pages with the major criteria for [accessing books; they show] how we go about the materials, whether it's fiction or non-fiction" (024A). Further, 024A explained that the policy was based on the well-established policies used by other schools; however, over the period of 20 years, the policy document was expanded, corrected and adjusted by librarians and teachers. Clearly, policy development was a collective effort influenced by formal and informal conversations. When I asked how the policy was used to judge a new book that might join a library collection, 024A said, "You look at this on a case-by-case basis and [in the context of our] library policy. And you assess it in terms of the selection guidelines – you know, "Does it meet criteria?". Also, 024A admitted that the informal decision-making process would take place in addition to checking if the book met the criteria described in the policy document: teachers and librarians would discuss cases of controversial books in the staffroom or during other meetings. "You build up, I suppose, an intellectual databank in your brain and that sort of thing. And other people test it, which is good. That's what you need", 024A explained, implying an active cooperation between teachers and librarians. Consequently, the school policy criteria, informal conversations between teachers and librarians, and personal judgements would lead to individual decisions made by a person in charge.

One consequence of having a written policy describing procedures for selecting picturebooks for library collections was trust in the institution. Common approval (or disapproval) of a book by several gatekeepers was important to the participants. In the case of common approval, a teacher was more likely to rely on the communal decision instead of going through a long and challenging process of accessing the book using all the criteria of appropriateness described above (sections 4.3.1, 4.3.2 and 4.3.3.). For instance, 027A said, "Would I do it in the classroom? I would. Because it's there, and they've got it on the library shelves", meaning that because the book had been approved by other experts of CL, there would be no reason to worry. The teachers and librarians would usually trust opinions of school principals, reviewers of book-oriented magazines (e.g., *Magpie*) and the juries of prestigious book awards (e.g., Children's Book Council of Australia abbreviated as CBCA).

Yet, the experience of some research participants showed that even if a book was approved by one person or one institution, it might still be perceived as inappropriate by others. This was true for some award-winning books. A few picturebooks that won international book awards for their outstanding aesthetic features may not be perceived as suitable for children by educators. One example was *My Dog* (2001), which won the CBCA Picturebook of the Year Award in 2002. According to 028A, many educators were upset that the title and the book-cover did not match the controversial content of the book. The other example was *The Great Bear* (2010) which was short-listed for the CBCA Picture Book of the Year Award and won of the prestigious Bologna Ragazzi Award, in the category: Fiction for Infants in 2000. Trusting that the awarded book should be suitable for children, "Lots of schools bought it, even though, you can tell explicitly from the cover that it's not going to be a happy story and that it's not targeting younger children, and many primary schools were confronted by it" (020A). These examples showed that despite trusting the institutions, schools and individual educators had agency to make their own decisions on the appropriateness of books. Another example of how librarians might disagree with teachers on book appropriateness for classroom discussion was provided by 031A:

> A group of library technicians meet regularly, once a month. And one of them works in a high school without a teacher librarian there. So, she's on her own in the library. She said, "I'm just so concerned about the assigned reading we're giving to these secondary students." And she had the books there to show us. I mean, one

> was involving suicide. I can't remember [the title]… There was a lot of violence. And she said, “I just… I did not expect…” You, know, your job is to prepare the books and have them for an English teacher. But she said, “I'm really concerned what we’re feeding our children”. (031A)

Moreover, institutional decisions on appropriateness could be reviewed and changed. 024A mentioned that sometimes they would re-consider their decision about a book. If the book was actively used in the classroom, they would re-examine it and ask themselves, “Why didn’t we put that in the senior fiction [section] in the first place?” (024A) or, conversely, they would ask if this book really belonged in the general collection. 024A recalled, “We had somebody asking about a particular book that had some unhealthy language. And we looked at it, and we realised, “Oh, we had intended that to be a senior fiction, and for some error, it has come through the system”. That does not happen often. That is quite a rare case” (024A). In addition, 024A explained that while deciding on book appropriateness, the librarian would consult with a school counsellor and other school staff. Therefore, although teachers and librarians had agency to decide, those decisions were often made collegially.

There was little information about the influence of policies on the decision-making of Ukrainian gatekeepers. 001U and 009U mentioned that those policies existed; however, they were rather outdated. Instead of referring to policies and rules, Ukrainian participants often referred to the school curriculum, explaining that it influences the selection of books and recommending them to children.

4.6.3.4. The impact of curricula on decision-making in Ukraine

The Ukrainian participants often based their decision on the appropriateness of a book on its belonging to a school curriculum. The gatekeepers were aware that books in the curriculum sometimes represented violence. For example, 002U said, “Many books included in the curriculum represent violence, different types of violence. They are present in both Ukrainian and world literature” (002U). These books were accepted by the majority of the participants and criticised by some.

If a story was a compulsory reading and was recognised as a Ukrainian classic, the Ukrainian teachers and librarians were likely to accept such a book as appropriate despite the presence of violence. The participants said:

> I don't think this [a graphic novel] book [*Hero unwillingly* (2014)] depicts anything scary. I mean, it's reality. This book was written by Ivan Franko, and it is a part of the curriculum. It's about war and revolution [in the 19th century]. (002U)

> Shevchenko is a classic author; it is a part of the school curriculum; it is our national identity. We have to know it. Perhaps, our literature reflects our [sad] history. We have to learn it. *Yaroslavna's Lament* [2016] should be taught at school. (003U)

> This is a classic. It should be taught. It should be known. I know… I read the poem [*Yaroslavna's Lament* (2016 [1860]) by Shevchenko], but it is taught in year 9… not in year 1. (004U)

At the same time, one participant disagreed with the idea, and said that she would not want children to read a certain story even if it was a classic or a part of curriculum:

> 017U: What if the only thing a child remembers is "died", "will die", "burnt", "burn"? It is way too pessimistic. I would not recommend this even though it is a classic.
> H: It is also a part of the curriculum. Children learn it in year 9 or 10.
> 017U: Yes, in year 9 or 10… Despite being part of the curriculum, stories like this are difficult to understand.

Furthermore, not only classics included in the curriculum were questioned. Fairy tales also evoked somewhat polarised responses. Although 017U was against teaching *Yaroslavna's Lament* (2016), she supported the idea of teaching fairy tales at school. She said, "This is a tale. We read it when we were children, and it is a part of the school curriculum. I think, to a certain extent, it is appropriate to recommend this tale to children because it is a part of the school curriculum" (017U). On the contrary, 005U claimed that some fairy tales taught at school were difficult to work with. She said, "As an adult, I would

not feel comfortable working with some of the authentic tales included in the school curriculum, unless I worked with a biblio-therapist or with a psychiatrist" (005U). Therefore, participants mostly agreed that the texts included in the curriculum were appropriate for children; however, some texts were claimed to be difficult to work with.

Finally, there was some disagreement about the appropriateness of old realistic short stories representing violence. The commonly mentioned example was *Fedko-Khalamydnyk* (1906) by Volodymyr Vynnychenko. 014U explained, "This story represents emotional and moral violence inflicted by Fedko's father and physical violence"; however, children had to read it as part of the school curriculum. Some Ukrainian participants said that even if the story was included in the school curriculum, it was not appropriate for young readers. They described *Fedko-Khalamydnyk* (1906) as "a terrible book" (017U) and "shocking!" (018U). Furthermore, 018U gave an example that showed how parental authority was greater than the authority of the school curriculum. She said:

> Once, a mother came to a library. She said, "I came to school and said to a teacher not to read this [*Fedko-Khalamydnyk*] because I forbade my child to read it… In my family, no one hurts children. After we read this, the son asked, "Why do they beat him? Why does he do it?" The mother read the book and said, "That's it. My child will not read it. Our family is not like this. He learns from books. He should be older to read this". So, she had forbidden him to read it. (018U)

Not only did this example show the hierarchy between different gatekeepers, it showed that some gatekeepers were against children reading certain books because they believed the book could negatively influence a child's moral judgement and felt incapable of answering uncomfortable questions asked by children.

Consequently, if an illustrated text was included in the school curriculum, this might be used by some Ukrainian participants as a justification for reading a book representing violence. After all, specialists who created the curriculum also acted as gatekeepers selecting books. At the same time, some Ukrainian teachers, librarians and parents disagreed. Many said they were not comfortable discussing the books with children.

4.6.3.5. The perceived role of parental involvement in Ukraine

The role of parents was perceived as paramount by the Ukrainian participants when deciding on the appropriateness of a picturebook. During the interviews, I asked if the discussed picturebooks were more suitable for reading with parents, reading and discussing in a classroom or reading by children on their own? The most common Australian response was that the books could be used effectively during classroom discussions or elsewhere. Whereas, the Ukrainian participants usually said the books should be read with parents. Furthermore, they claimed that if books were read with parents, the *harmful* effect of violence on a young reader could be minimised. Consequently, the influence of parental involvement on deciding if a book was suitable was greater in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian participants said that if a picturebook was read to children by their parents, children had an opportunity to ask clarifying questions and, consequently, parents could explain unclear moments. This mitigated the risk of upsetting or frightening the child and the picturebook representing violence was perceived as acceptable. The participants said:

> *Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* [2015] should be read with parents. No, I would not recommend that [6-year-olds] read this book on their own… The child will want to ask, "What is going on here?" If the child is asking this question to parents, it is a great opportunity to explain [the situation]. (012U)

> Of course, this book [*Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* (2015)] must be read with parents. Parents should explain to children who these shadows are because the child should be afraid not of the shadows and of the darkness. This [book] should play a different role. (008U)

> I would recommend this [*Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* (2015)] for older children [older than 10]. When it comes to younger children, they should read this with their parents only because their parents can explain it to them that this is not OK… Overall, I would not recommend this book to younger readers. (011U)

The Ukrainian participants often talked about the *correct interpretation* of a book. They said if the topic is difficult (e.g., war) and a context is unfamiliar (e.g., historical fiction), the parents' role was to explain the situation to their children and interpret the book together. For instance, 007U said, "I think this illustration and this book is more suitable for family reading. Because, if the theme is related to war and history, children usually need comments of adults: comments of their parents. Children do not understand what is going on, they cannot comprehend what war is" (007U). Similarly, 009U explained, "This is more suitable for reading with parents because parents can explain the context so that it is clear and interpreted properly" (009U). Furthermore, 018U added, "I think, books like these are read with parents. The child will always ask questions. Children usually ask; those children who read books ask questions" (018U). The teachers were sometimes mentioned too; however, parents were given preference. 013U said, "I think it would be better to read this with parents or at school. Because a child may express their thoughts, and an adult can reject or approve the thought, or give a piece of advice on how to behave in this situation. Because the child might *shut down* and have some wrong ideas about similar situations" (013U).

Parents were perceived as responsible for reading books to young children, interpreting and explaining complex themes and catering for their emotional wellbeing. It was believed that parents knew their children's maturity and sensitivity and could therefore choose the most appropriate interpretation. The participants said:

> If parents are taking care of their children, the children will not be scared. They might say, "Oh, this is scary!" and mum will explain. (018U)

> I think, a child will have many questions about this book *The Great Bear* [2010]. First of all, "What happened to the bear?" This will depend on parents because the child will not understand what happened to the bear. The interpretation depends on parents. Well, I would say that the bear died and now he is in Heaven. There are parents who would say that the bear escaped or… I doubt there are parents who would say he committed suicide. (012U)

> It is necessary to discuss books like these with children. For example, if a story is about one person hurting another, it is necessary to explain the situation to a child. Well, every mother knows her child: she knows which words to choose and how to explain it. If a child is very sensitive, the words can be soft; but if a child is like… [laughing] then the words can be strong so that the child understands. It is necessary to read books with children. (001U)

Furthermore, it was believed that the tone and intonation parents use to read picturebooks aloud also influenced children's responses to representations of violence. The participants suggested that if a picturebook representing violence was read by parents in a soft and kind voice, the violence could be made more palatable. For example, 011U said, "Perhaps, if you read the same text with a different intonation, you could read it to children… It is very important how you read the book… Parents would read this in a soft voice" (011U). Later, she used the same argument to judge a picturebook. She said:

> Perhaps, this is for family reading. As I said, it can be read in a soft voice, with calm intonation, with no aggression. How you read it plays a big role. But I would not recommend children to read this book on their own, only with parents. When they read it with parents, they can read it even at the age of 5 or 6. (011U)

Similarly, 018U explained that, in her opinion, contemporary cartoons were more violent than traditional fairy tales because rhythm and intonation differed in these types of narratives. She suggested that tales had a calming rhythm; she said, "In fairy tales, I like rhythm. When you read it, there is this la-la-la, la-la-la, la-la… It sounds smooth, it flows" (018U). In addition, 018U explained that she never thought about violence in "Ivasyk-Telesyk" (2013) because her grandma read the tale to her in a soft melodious voice. Consequently, the intonation of the storyteller influenced her interpretation of the story. She said, "There is this rhythm, each word… I remember how my granny used to read this to me [softly] "Geese, my lovely geese, take me on your wings!" So, no one would even think about Baba Yaga [the evil character] when you read a tale like this to a very young children; they use the rhythm, children seem to be mesmerised. Of course, [not] if you read it [harshly]: "The wolf captured this naked child!" No need to do that. The way children

interpret the story depends on the emphasis the adults make" (018U). The Ukrainian interviews made this clear: the intonation of a storyteller impacted interpretations of violence.

While the Australian colleagues agreed that parents were important decision-makers in the process of approving books, Ukrainian participants often mentioned the significance of parental influence on the child's interpretation of a book. The reason might be that the Ukrainian participants attributed more power to oral storytelling and believed that even sensitive children who read books representing violence could cope with sophisticated ideas and emotionally disturbing topics if parents read the texts with soft intonation, explained the complexities to a child and comforted them. It can be concluded that the Ukrainian participants recognised parental involvement as significant when deciding about the appropriateness of a picturebooks representing violence.

4.6.4. Conclusions: context matters

To summarise, culture clearly influenced gatekeeper perceptions of fictional violence. Often violence in songs and fairy tales was so deeply anchored in cultural tradition that it was almost invisible. In addition, familiarity with context was considered. If a representation of violence in a picturebook was relatable or familiar to children, the gatekeepers said that there was merit in discussing it with children. However, they agreed that such discussions should be conducted in a helpful manner because there was a high risk of frightening or upsetting children. Australian participants mostly disliked the idea of discussing picturebooks about war with children, although there were different views on the matter. Ukrainian participants had polarised opinions about whether Ukrainian children should read and discuss picturebooks about war. Some said these discussions were unavoidable; others said such discussions should be avoided because they would be too painful for children and gatekeepers. Lastly, the Australians were often guided by school policy on library collection development and influenced by the author's reputation. The judgements of Ukrainian participants were influenced by school curricula and parental involvement in reading.

4.7. Strategies for curating picturebooks representing violence

This section maps tendencies in curating picturebooks representing violence after books have been selected and purchased for a collection. It answers the research questions: How are the picturebooks representing violence curated by the gatekeepers? Namely, it explores how books representing violence are offered to readers and discussed with them in Australia and Ukraine. In addition, the roles of gatekeepers are considered.

4.7.1. Offering picturebooks to children

The participants reported several ways to curate controversial picturebooks in library collections. First, children could have open, limited and supervised access to picturebooks. This could be achieved by both shelving and tagging books. In addition, children and parents could be warned about the presence of violence in picturebooks; this would allow readers to decide if they wanted to read them. Finally, teachers and librarians could guide young readers by recommending certain books and discouraging others.

The Australian participants believed picturebooks representing violence could be physically separated from the general collection and placed on shelves with *limited access*. In addition, picturebooks could be tagged as *senior*. This way, librarians would be informed when a child intended to borrow a picturebook with controversial or complex themes and could warn them. Also, the concept of *supervised access* was discussed. If picturebooks representing violence were placed on open access shelves and not tagged as *senior*, the teachers would escort students and supervise their access to the books to ensure the children chose age-appropriate texts.

The Ukrainian participants would not recommend books representing violence to children and would warn children and their parents interested in such books that they might be disturbing. However, the books would often remain on the open access shelves. The participants did not mention tagging picturebooks as *senior*; however, in their responses, they implied that books in library collections were categorised in accordance with recommended ages, and they suggested that *supervised access* and sometimes *limited access* were practised in Ukraine too. The main difference between the countries was that Australian teachers and librarians believed they were responsible for supervising children's

access to library books; whereas, Ukrainian parents were expected to be the primary gatekeepers, and teachers and librarians saw their role as recommending books to both children and parents.

4.7.1.1. Access to picturebooks: limited, supervised and open

One way to curate picturebooks was to physically separate those containing controversial themes from books for all ages sections. As a result, most books were placed on open access bookshelves, and some books were assigned to shelves with limited and supervised access. One secondary school librarian explained:

> Wherever possible, we try to have it [the book] on the open shelves. Not always. With some more explicit material that we've been asked to get, for usually pre-tertiary work, which would not be suitable on the open shelves, that would be in our stockroom, which is closed access… It's available through our catalogue. You can see it. So, it is not hidden from you in that sense. But it does mean that there is a controlled, supervised access to it. (024A)

Supervised access meant that a child had to talk to teachers and librarians before borrowing the book from the library collection. This way, the teachers and librarians could see if the book was suitable for the particular child. 024A gave an example of a situation where a student requested a book targeted for older children:

> So, they come in and say, "Oh, you've got that! Can I have it?" We had one boy who particularly wanted senior fiction, and he was in year 8. And I said, "Yes, you can have that [pause] when you're in grade 9… If you are particularly interested in this, you are most welcome to talk to your English teacher about it". So, we let them know the pathway that is available for them always. (024A)

Therefore, teachers and librarians curated the books and supervised children's choices of literature by placing certain books onto supervised shelves, so that the child reader would have to request the book and, consequently, have a conversation with a librarian and a

teacher about the selected reading. The shelves were not necessarily hidden. Sometimes, it was enough to place the picturebooks representing *mature* themes on a separate shelf, so that toddlers would not find them in the picturebook section. For example, some picturebooks and graphic novels were placed among teenage novels. An Australian librarian, 031A, shared her experience of such a physical separation of picturebooks in a library:

> The way we organised it was: picturebooks in one section in the library… What we called *older picturebooks* were with the older fiction altogether in another section. And then non-fiction was in the third section. So, let's say, up to grade 2 we always directed them to the younger picturebooks. And then, you know, gradually, they would move to the older books. (031A)

According to some Australian participants, teachers could escort children in the library during library lessons, and in this way supervise their choices. One teacher who taught in a primary school explained:

> There is a selection of books within each school room (e.g., 50, 60, 70 books)… books that children of that age can cope with. Then, there is an extensive library where children themselves go and select their books… That is guided by the teacher who is with the children in the library at the time. (025A)

This meant that if a child was very sensitive, the teacher could warn them about potentially disturbing content. If the child was an accomplished reader eager to read any book, the teacher could allow access to a wider range of books. In addition, Australian children younger than 12 often visited school libraries with parents or other caregivers. It could be assumed that parents would supervise and guide their children to help them select suitable books. However, none of the Australian participants talked in any detail of parental supervision of children in a library.

Unlike their Australian colleagues, Ukrainian participants seemed less likely to use limited access shelves for separating picturebooks representing violence. Open access shelves and shelves with a supervised access were common arrangements in Ukrainian libraries. The participants tended to offer a wide range of books, including picturebooks

representing violence. The argument was that children's freedom should not be restricted: sensitive children should be protected; however, this should not be achieved at the expense of other children who might enjoy reading scary or sad stories. 018U argued, "To say, "You are not allowed to [read this]" means to impose your own will on someone. Children at the age of 9, 10 or 11 already have some understanding" (018U) and, "Overall, we should allow children to read all picturebooks" (018U). She elaborated, saying that picturebooks with *ugly* illustrations or *scary* scenes should be available to children because they might have different aesthetic tastes than adults. She said she would not recommend the book *Blossom Possum* (2006) to readers, but she would place it on the open access shelves in case someone was interested. She explained:

> Sometimes, one child laughs and another cries while reading the same book… Usually, primary school children come to the library with their parents. Their parents might say, "No, I don't want to take this", and I am against this because nothing should be forbidden. Children should have a look at those books… Children themselves draw bizarre pictures. Maybe, they like illustrations like that. (018U)

In addition, 017U explained, "We have open access shelves because children differ. Some children choose books on their own, some children need recommendations". Therefore, it was assumed that children who knew how to read and preferred to choose books independently should be given this opportunity; whereas, children who preferred to be recommended books could be guided by a librarian or by parents when choosing books.

The only case when controversial picturebooks would be placed onto limited access shelves but still be available on request was where it encountered public disapproval. 009U said that they moved a picturebook featuring the death of a butterfly from the open access shelves onto the limited access shelves because parents were unhappy with the book. Parent claimed that the book cover and illustrations were child-friendly, bright and colourful; however, the text was grim and not suitable for children. Furthermore, the visuals did not warn readers that the book explored the theme of death. 001U shared a similar story about an illustrated collection of folktales which included a tale representing violence:

001U: So, there is this tale about a monkey who injured a man with a razor… So, there was a discussion on whether this book could be given to children? Many people wrote: who selects tales like this? How can one give it to children? So, there were plenty of negative opinions; the response was very negative.
H: Parental response?
001U: These were parents and journalists. I think, there was a discussion of this issue in the [newspaper] *Vysoky Zamok*… in the 2000s. We have this book in our library. [The librarian showed me the book which they stored in a separate room filled with other books that were borrowed less often].
H: Have children ever asked for this book?
001U: These are folktales. Children ask for books like that only if it is part of the curriculum. Also, if these are folktales, they are usually read to children by their parents when children are very young. I noticed children do not choose to read folktales now.

As explained previously, Ukrainian participants expected parents to be actively involved in the process of selecting books. Also, fairy tales were expected to be read to children by parents. Therefore, Ukrainian teachers and librarians often believed that parents should be the primary gatekeepers offering such books to their children.

4.7.1.2. Senior picturebooks

In addition to different types of physical access to picturebooks, there was also a digital strategy to supervise a child's access to controversial books used in Australia. Picturebooks representing violence could be segregated from others with a tag *senior* on a book spine and in a digital catalogue. This strategy could be used side-by-side with the already mentioned placement of books on hidden or supervised shelves. When 031A looked at picturebooks representing war during the interview, she said, "I can tell you we've got all three of these books in the library I'm working in. And they are in what we call the *senior picturebook* section" (031A). 024A said, "A picturebook can be tagged as senior fiction" and explained:

> We have a *senior fiction* tag for material, which is probably aimed at an older readership… And the students from the younger grades can look at it, but they can't take it home, they can't take it out of the building unless their English teacher has a conversation with me. And they can't just say, "Oh, Mrs So-and-so sent me down to get this book". No. So we have a conversation with a teacher and we discuss it, and find out what is happening there, and support the teacher at whatever they wanted to do with that. (024A)

Furthermore, even if books were available in an open access collection, librarians and teachers could track who borrowed those books, limit access to age-inappropriate books (if necessary) and guide parents of very young children. 020A gave a thorough explanation of how the system works:

> I believe one needs some sort of guidance in terms of how they [books about war] are borrowed. So, the library system allows that in that you can actually send the loan so that younger children cannot access certain books. And I've always had a category where I've put like *SP* [senior picturebooks] on the barcode in the cataloguing. I shelved them separately, so only the upper primary kids and high school kids went to those shelves. It was a huge collection. But if a younger kid got one of those books and brought it up and wanted to borrow it, it would set up an alert saying: *Senior picturebook.* (020A)

Consequently, tagging some picturebooks in this way in the library catalogue played a similar role to the physical separation of books onto different shelves because once the computer showed the *red flag* of the *senior* tag, the librarian would be notified. This way the librarian could talk to a child, to a parent or to a teacher about the book. 020A explained this with reference to Mark Wilson's picturebook *My Mother's Eyes* (2011), saying, "I think I had that in the *Senior picturebooks*… which was open to pretty much the grade 5s upwards" (020A). She also mentioned if a younger child wanted to borrow the picturebook, they would have to talk to her.

The process of deciding whether a picturebook should be tagged as *senior* is exemplified in 031A's response to my interview question:

H: Would you place it [*Yaroslavna's Lament* (2016)] among senior picturebooks or among younger picturebooks, if this book was in the library?
031A: I will definitely put it as a senior picturebook. Because you're talking about deep… about fear and grief about what has happened. How is she going to react to that? This is quite confronting. I don't think I would want to share it with a young child.

As explained previously, the emotional response of the reader and the *complexity* of the themes would drive the gatekeepers' decision-making process. Decisions on the appropriateness of picturebooks for certain ages would consequently influence the decision to separate books physically onto special shelves or tag them as *senior*.

Not all Australian libraries used the *senior picturebook* tag. For example, 025A indicated that her school had no librarians, and all the books were selected, organised and curated by teachers. When I asked her, "Do you have any special tags saying something like *Senior book* or something like that?", she replied, "No, we don't because some [children] absolutely love them [picturebooks representing violence], and others cringe when they read them" (025A). This approach resembled the Ukrainian way of supervising children's access to books representing violence.

4.7.1.3. Recommending picturebooks to children

In addition to tagging books, the gatekeeping of picturebooks included several other strategies. The Australian and Ukrainian gatekeepers could encourage children to read *safe* books by actively recommending them and could warn the young readers if a book was perceived as possibly disturbing. Also, Ukrainian participants mentioned the strategy of *silencing* books by never mentioning their existence to children.

Librarians had a substantial influence on reader choices in both countries. The Australian librarians agreed that very young children rarely used digital catalogues and would listen to librarians' advice. The digital catalogue in Ukrainian libraries was often not available to visitors and children, so parents had to choose the book from open access shelves or request them from book storage through a face-to-face conversation with a

librarian. In Ukraine, when children were old enough to read themselves (approximately 7) and could visit a library on their own (8 and older), children often asked the Ukrainian librarians for their recommendation. For example, 010U said, “Often, children don’t know which book to choose. They look at a book, they find it attractive but they often cannot choose and ask us to recommend a book for them” (010U). 008U explained that librarians recommended books according to the genres readers liked. She said, “Readers trust you. You ask, “Would you like to read something historical? Or something fantastic? Perhaps, something melodramatic? Something else? Over time, you learn about readers’ genre preferences, and that’s great” (008U). Similarly, 006U said, “Some children like adventures, some children like horror and some like romance. You need to read those books yourself to know which books to recommend to a particular child. Everybody has their preferences” (006U). Also, 008U explained that sometimes librarians could recommend a book aimed at helping children cope with personal problems. She said:

> Often, children tell librarians something they are afraid to say to their parents. This is a big responsibility. One should be able to understand a child and give a gentle piece of advice, to support a child not so much with words, but with a book. The book can help the child by boosting their mood or by describing a similar problem. (008U)

Substantial parental authority in selecting books for children was evident in Ukraine. 009U explained that, in the primary school library section, the books were borrowed by families. She said, “The child comes to the library with parents and parents decide, “Yes, we will take this book. Yes, we have had a look at it and we will read it”” (009U). The librarians often recommended children’s books to parents as well as to children. 008U said parents often asked librarians on behalf of their children to recommend a book to read. They would say, “Could you recommend a book to read [for my child]? I trust your opinion” (008U). 017U agreed:

> Often, we recommend books to parents too. Adults come to our library, grab a book for themselves and say, “My child does not read at all”, or “My child likes reading about this and that”; then they ask you to recommend a book. You ask them about

> the child's age; you ask them if it is a girl or a boy; you ask about their child's hobbies and interests. Then you take into account all the data and recommend some books to them. (017U)

Librarians also mentioned that some Ukrainian parents had conservative views. They wanted their children to read books they read as children despite potentially unfamiliar contexts. For instance, 012U explained how he recommended to his children books he liked as a child; however, he admitted his children did not always read the books eagerly. Other participants said:

> Some parents recommended their children read books which they liked as children. Sometimes I would try to persuade them, saying, "You see, we live in a different time; children have different interests. I doubt your children will find these books interesting". (007U)

> At first, parents perceive literature aggressively because they think it is necessary for children to read what they read as children. They insist, "If I read Haidar, my child should read Haidar too". Never mind that the child might not like it. The child will not be able to comprehend the meaning of the story because he or she will not understand the symbols and the context of the story. Unless parents explain everything to a child, the child will not be interested. (008U)

> H: What about parents? Have parents asked you not to give certain books to their children when they come to the library with them?
> 006U: They ask us to give them something nice; something that cultivates kindness… something where good triumphs over evil, something that has nothing scary in it.

In addition to recommending books to children, some Ukrainian parents would forbid their child to read controversial books. However, violence was not among main reasons for denying access to a book by parents. Usually, the book was forbidden if it contained sexually explicit content or mentioned magic. The participants said:

> Sometimes you recommend a book [to parents]; they look at it and say, "No! It's too early for my child to read this. It's about romantic love. We will not take it". (017U)

> Some children will read *Harry Potter* five times or more; some children will say, "No, we cannot; our parents wouldn't let us read *Harry Potter.* (006U)

The librarians could encourage children to read some books and discourage them from reading others. For example, Australian participant 028A shared her experience of gently discouraging a child from reading a book representing a case of self-directed violence:

> Well, I was just putting books away, and I said to her, "Oh, I saw the weirdest book yesterday!" I did not show it to her. She was in year 6. And, I said, "It's about a boy who eats himself, and he talks about the process he goes through as he eats himself" and I said, "It was disgusting!" And she was like, "Ew! No! I wouldn't want to read that. It doesn't sound very nice at all! (028A)

Similarly, Ukrainian participant 011U explained how she would discourage readers from reading books if she thought the content was inappropriate, but the reader was accomplished. She said about *Australian Gnomes* (1979), "Is this just one illustration? Well, if the text is alright, I would say, "Perhaps, you would find this book boring; it has some cruel scenes. However, it's up to you". I would say this to an older reader. If this was a very young child, I would not give them this book at all" (011U).

For the Ukrainian participants, if a book featured controversial themes and they were aware of this, they would always warn young readers. For example, 013U said, "This book … can be read by young children. But then… When we recommend this book to children, we should tell them what this book is about. We should warn them. We should always warn the child because some readers will be fine with this; other readers need to be protected" (013U). Similarly, 011U explained, "I warn them [children] if the book is not a good fit for them. They say, "No, we can read. We read adult books". I say, "You will not comprehend it". Next day, the child comes to our library and says, "You were right. This

book is for older people. It's boring. I have read it, but you were right, I should have not read it" (011U). The argument here was that if the book was not suitable for children, children would not enjoy reading it because it would be too complex, inaccessible or boring. The librarians acknowledged the child's agency in selecting books to read. At the same time, they thought warning children about potentially disturbing content was their responsibility.

Not only did the Ukrainian librarians warn children, they would also warn parents. Parents were expected to familiarise themselves with a book and approve or disapprove it. Clearly, the gatekeeping role of parents in curating books was significant in Ukraine. The participants said:

> If a book contains something like this [an illustration depicting branding of animals], we warn parents that this type of illustration is present in the book. We would also warn a child [if the child came to the library without parents] to prevent any emotional distress. We would just explain that things used to be this way in the past. (010U)

> I would warn parents that the book includes scenes of violence and overt cruelty against an animal. I'd say you could borrow this book, but please [before giving it to children] read it yourself and think if you want your child to read this. (008U)

> We have books with horrible illustrations [in our library collection]. Well, it's not that the illustrations evoke horror… But they are drawn horribly [they are ugly]. In this case, we offer parents the opportunity to have a look at the book first. For example, poems written by Oster are funny and wonderful; but the illustrations are monstrous. So, we say to parents, "Will your child be fine with these illustrations? Perhaps, we show them one or two images, and if it's fine… Or just read the book aloud without looking at the illustrations. Because these illustrations are drawn in a way that… they look evil and spooky. (008U)

Apart from warning children, the Ukrainian librarians sometimes used a strategy of *silencing* picturebooks. Not recommending some picturebooks to children could have even stronger effect than physically hiding the books or tagging them. A vast number of books in

the library and no access to a digital catalogue meant that readers often relied on librarian recommendations; they might not notice certain books even if they were available on the open access shelves. Besides, if those books were not tagged or marked, they would just blend in with other books and not evoke any special interest, as forbidden books might have done. 017U said about *The War that Changed Rondo*:

> We have got this book; it looks a bit too dark to me. We had it on the open access shelves. I did not recommend it to children. I was prejudiced against this book. It was available on the open access shelves because we always place the new books there to give children an opportunity to have a look… And you know, no child ever chose this book. Somehow no one was interested. (017U)

A case of *not recommending* books to parents was mentioned by 006U who reported that some parents refused to borrow books like *The Vampire Sisters [2013]* or *Harry Potter* [1997] for their children because of religious views, saying that "the story is about something devilish, about magic" (006U). As a result, the librarian stopped recommending books with titles like these to children and parents. She decided she would give these books to readers only if they requested them.

4.7.2. Discussing picturebooks with children

Discussing picturebooks with children was seen to be as important as supervising a child's access to the picturebooks representing violence in library. The participants of both countries had almost identical views on the matter. As explained previously, the participants found talking about violence with children quite challenging but necessary, and picturebooks could be a helpful tool for this. 008U said *Waltzing Matilda* (2007) "must be discussed, so that it does not remain in a child's subconsciousness as something scary, as an unjust human deed" (008U). 029A explained:

> The main thing that fictional violence does is open up a dialogue, doesn't it? Especially with picturebooks, it's an easy way of coming to a discussion about the problem that is dealt with within the book. Most people are not going just to stand

> up and talk about [violence]… It's always good to have a soft leverage into discussing something like that. (029A)

Discussing picturebooks representing violence in the classroom was seen as a better option than children reading such picturebooks on their own. To start with, the discussion could provide children with guidance when interpreting challenging topics they may struggle to understand independently. 027A said, "We can read the same words and have totally different understandings of them. And, with the pictures it is the same" (027A), therefore, it was important to unpack some complex ideas as a group and acknowledge a range of perspectives on the issue. Also, discussing certain traumatic topics in a group might have had a therapeutic effect on students. Looking at *My Dog* (2001) and *Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* (2015) picturebooks, 025A explained, "If you let children talk afterwards, it turns out to be a rewarding experience instead of a damaging one" (025A). Furthermore, the group discussion of topics like violence was seen as a better approach than one-to-one conversations. For example, 024A suggested:

> This [discussion] can be helpful in a group situation. A child [might] not be strong enough to deal with this [issue] emotionally, perhaps because it's too sensitive, on a one-on-one basis. But they might be prepared to listen to how others in a group talk about it in class (024A).

The Ukrainian participants also thought a group discussion of a picturebook representing violence could potentially have a therapeutic effect on children. 008U said about *The War that Changed Rondo*:

> This book is perfect for family reading and for a class discussion. It is very touching and very therapeutic because it shows how to come back to life after the war. The [discussed] illustrations represent what happens when the war comes and the consequences of war. However, this book also tells its readers about the restoration (008U).

The participants believed picturebooks were more useful for discussing representations of violence in the classroom than novels. The main reason given was that the picturebook could be read and looked at quickly. This would leave more time for the discussion. For instance, 027A said that children "can read the story without having [to read] a whole novel on it" (027A). Similarly, 022A explained:

> I use picturebooks in grade 10 as a sample of an allegory. So, it's 300 words, something like 300 words, so I can read it in 10 minutes, and then they will read a 3,000 words critical analysis of that text looking at, you know, structure and imagery and vocabulary… they are tempted to think about the picturebooks as being [intended] for early childhood, and in the main they are, but that [*Feathers and fools* (1996)] is not. (022A)

Furthermore, some participants believed representations of violence in picturebooks are *safer* than in novels because they are less detailed and explicit due to the short format and target audience. For instance, when deciding whether to purchase a novel or a picturebook about Anne Frank for 7- to 8-year-old child, she said:

> I read it [the picturebook] during the holidays before I decided whether to include it or not [in the library collection] and whether to give it to this child. I read it, and I felt comfortable with myself. It didn't talk too much about Hitler and the Nazis, or war… It was more about her as a child, and I felt fine giving it to her. And she ended up really liking it and enjoying it (028A).

4.7.2.1. The teacher's role in the discussion

The Australian participants often stressed the importance of the teacher's role in discussing picturebooks representing violence with children. The teacher was expected to create a safe and empathetic environment for discussing sensitive topics, provide children with prompt questions encouraging further exploration, and decide on the depth of discussion. The participants highlighted the importance of the teacher in guiding the discussion by saying:

> It depends on how teachers want to use it [a picturebook]. (024A)

> It's kind of: what are you discussing with students? Why are you discussing those themes? And how are you addressing it? (026A)

> That might be very powerful for them to actually read the story and discuss it in the safety of their classroom. But you know, that requires some sensitivity on the part of the teacher. (022A)

Creating a safe space to discuss representations of violence in picturebooks was seen as an essential task for teachers. One way to create a safe and supportive environment was to identify students who might be sensitive about the issue and ask if they were comfortable with the discussion about the topic. 030A gave an example of how she did this:

> I'm perfectly happy for it [a picturebook representing war] to be in the classroom, as long as I know that the classroom situation is empathetic to the various different needs of the children and their backgrounds. For example, when I was teaching *Schindler's List*[10] in year 10, I had a German exchange student in my class, and I spoke to him first about that because I wanted to understand whether he was comfortable or uncomfortable. As it turned out, it was terrific because he was very open to joining in the discussion, and it was very helpful for all my student and, probably, quite helpful for him too to be able to share his thoughts (030A).

Another example was shared by 028A. The librarian and schoolchildren were discussing *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015), depicting bomb explosions and injured soldiers, when she realised that one of her students became upset with the topic. The student was originally from Africa, and as it turned out, one of her siblings died from a mine incident. To manage the situation, 028A said to her student, "Would you like to go and read something else? Maybe, with a friend, go and sit somewhere else". She also added:

[10] The participant is using an example of a film discussion; however, in this particular case, this could have been a discussion of a picturebook about the Second World War and the Holocaust.

> The rest of the class were very interested in this topic. So, this other friend was able to cheer her up, and make her feel a bit better. And, I apologised after reading this book to her because I did not realise that that would come, and that that was an issue for her. But, in the future, if I was planning on reading a book with those kinds of scenes in it, and she was in the classroom, I would, probably, give her a bit of the warning, and give her a decision whether she wants to listen or not. (028A)

Some participants suggested that even if students in the classroom were not particularly sensitive about an issue, the safe and empathetic environment was still required. If the discussion took place in primary school, parental permission was seen as desirable. Talking about *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015) at school, 025A said, "They would be stressed… It would have to be a special sort of sharing" (025A). She added, "It needs to be shared very carefully, and you need to know the children you're sharing it with, and might even ask the permission of the parents to share this sort of literature" (025A). 008U also said that "children *a priori* believe they and their parents are immortal. This is why the theme of death should be handled carefully" (008U).

Necessary actions for creating a safe and empathetic environment included understanding students' needs and vulnerabilities, identifying potentially sensitive students, asking students if they were comfortable with discussing the issue. If the students were very young, a teacher was expected to seek parental permission to discuss the representation of violence in picturebooks at school. After the safe and empathetic environment was created, the teacher's role was to guide the discussion and ask appropriate prompt questions which would enable children to explore the issue in a helpful manner. For example, 025A said scaffolding and prompt questions were essential for discussing picturebooks representing war: "You wouldn't just share that! You do work beforehand. You'd share the book, and you do the work after. So, the book would have the greatest meaning for the children and wasn't just a story" (025A). Also, 022A explained that the prompt questions must be open to encourage children to think independently, even if the topic was challenging. He said:

> As a teacher when I ask a question, I normally want to ask an open-ended question. So, I would never say: "Did you like that book?" - "No, I didn't". When I read a book,

> I say, “So…”, and just look at them … And the other thing I do in terms of questioning technique is I don’t give the answers (022A).

Also, 022A said his use of open-ended questions would be very broad. He suggested, “You can start asking: “What is the meaning of this?” (022A) and explained, “I’ll read that, and then I will just look at them: “So [pause] what?” [pause] and wait. And they are starting a dialogue. So, I’m not imposing my preconceived notions, I’m saying: “What do you reckon? What do you think?” And if they can’t say anything, that’s fine, let’s move on” (022A). This *questioning technique* demonstrated teachers might give plenty of agency to students in terms of interpreting picturebooks. A similar example was provided by 029A, who explained that if she discussed *The Great Bear* (2010) with students, she would ask them, “What has happened? What do you feel has happened to the bear?” Also, she affirmed that she would “be led by their answers” (029A) rather than offer them her own interpretation. It was clear that teachers gave children agency in interpreting the discussed picturebooks and their guiding questions aimed to support and encourage them to think independently.

In addition to creating empathetic environment and supporting children with guiding questions, the teachers believed they needed to regulate the depth of the discussion. Consequently, they had to decide which themes to focus on and how detailed the discussion should be. The extent of the discussion was largely dependent on the teacher. The participants said:

> You can read it in many ways… It would be: what issues are in there and how are they communicated? (027A)

> I guess, it can be read on multiple levels, with different complexities. (028A)

> That is kind of the beauty of picturebooks, especially, when it is targeted toward appropriate ages, that you can use it for those sorts of discussions of war, that’s being handled in years 5 and 6, as well as, on up to the middle and early secondary years as a way of kind of nicely illustrating… the impact [of war]... and look at the appropriate discussions. (026A)

The depth of analysis for such a discussion would vary. 030A explained that if she was discussing *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* (2015) with her own grandson at home this would be a very different conversation in comparison to the discussion held with year 9 in the classroom. She said:

> If I were talking to my 4-year-old about this, I would be just looking at basically man's inhumanity to man, and how cruel we can be towards one another... in particular circumstances, or for particular reasons. But I would also want him to understand that, really, there is no reason to ever butcher people, to ever kill people for the... in a war … [If the book is discussed with year 9], you would probably favour the theme of mateship. And I would be talking to them about whether they thought there was ever a situation that this kind of behaviour is justifiable. (030A)

Here, it was very clear that although the teacher was encouraging the young readers to explore and interpret history using the picturebook, in the conversation with a small child the teacher did all the interpretive work, and in the classroom discussion with teenagers, the teacher was asking the students to think about the complex moral dilemma associated with war, guiding the discussion and giving them freedom to interpret the picturebooks in their own ways.

The role of the teacher in similar discussions was perceived somewhat differently by the Ukrainian participants. There was not enough data to make comprehensive conclusions; however, it seemed that a teacher was expected to provide students with a *correct* interpretation. For example, 009U said, “They have to learn this [*Yaroslavna’s Lament* (2016)] at school anyway. So that it is extremely important that the teacher positions the emphases correctly” (009U). Furthermore, a *correct* interpretation was often a non-violent one. For instance, 018U said, “Children will interpret everything the way they are taught to interpret by adults. If we say to a child, “This is cruel”, the child will think it is cruel” (018U).

4.7.2.2. Benefits of family reading

The Ukrainian participants often talked about the benefits of family reading. They suggested parents and children could have one-to-one conversations, and therefore the parents could tailor their interpretation in accordance with the child's *sensitivity*. 008U said unlike a classroom discussion, which is concerned with the structural features of the text, a family discussion of the book allowed children to explore the text on an emotional level: children and parents could discuss the emotions and feelings evoked by the story. She said about *Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* (2015):

> It would be difficult for children to read this on their own. Themes like this should be discussed. It is very sad that parents do not discuss the books from the school curriculum with children at home. There are lots of themes that need to be discussed with families because at school… the focus is on characters, on authors, on the historical context. However, it is necessary to discuss the feelings and emotions the book evokes (008U).

The idea of having one-to-one conversations rather than group discussions seemed to be appealing to the Ukrainian participants. For example, 019U said:

> This would be an appropriate reading for the majority of year 1 students. Of course, there is always some percentage of very sensitive children, but then parents should choose the books. Every mother knows their child. The same is true with teachers. It is necessary for the teacher to be ready to have individual conversations with [sensitive] children and to comfort them if required (019U).

Another benefit of family reading mentioned in the Ukrainian interviews was the potential educational value of reading picturebooks on controversial topics for the entire family. For example, 015U said, *Not Now, Bernard* (1980) "can be read by young children, but only with parents. So that the parents evaluate their own behaviour too. Because there are parents who say things like, "Not now", "Go back to your room to play there". That is why it is important that parents read it. Everyone will learn something" (015U). Moreover, 005U explained "Books are

the cheapest and most effective tools for organising a meaningful quality time for a family … the most emotionally satisfying tool (005U), highlighting multiple benefits of family reading.

To summarise, it was said that family reading could take into account the psychological portrait of each child; therefore, the Ukrainian participants favoured family reading as well as one-to-one discussions of a parent and a child. The Australian participants acknowledged the important role of parents in gatekeeping of CL; however, they often preferred classroom reading and group discussion to other types of discussions.

4.7.3. Conclusions: curating books

The participants reported different strategies for curating picturebooks representing violence in library collections. The Australian participants mentioned several strategies for managing the books, including physically separating picturebooks and tagging certain picturebooks as *senior*. Furthermore, they highlighted the importance of supervising young children when they access picturebooks representing complex and controversial topics. Ukrainian participants preferred having open access to all books. However, they also placed books that aroused public disapproval onto limited access shelves. They often talked about recommending appropriate books to children and not recommending books they found dark and disturbing. Also, they highlighted the important roles of parents in supervising children's access to books in the library and at school.

In addition to managing the book collections, the teachers and librarians had a number of strategies for guiding young readers. Discussing picturebooks representing violence was an important strategy for gatekeeping. Picturebooks were seen as useful tools for starting conversations about violence because of their affordability and brevity, leaving plenty of time for discussion. Australian participants said the main roles of teachers in the discussion were creating a safe and empathetic environment, guiding the discussion through open-ended prompt questions, and regulating the depth of discussion. Ukrainian participants focused on parent-child discussions and named several benefits of family reading; they concluded that many picturebooks representing violence should be discussed with parents who know their children's sensitivities and can create safe and supportive environments for the discussion. Therefore, the Australian participants tended to attribute a

gatekeeping role in book discussions to teachers, and the Ukrainian participants tended to prescribe a similar gatekeeping role to parents.

Figure 11

Curating Picturebooks Representing Violence in Australia

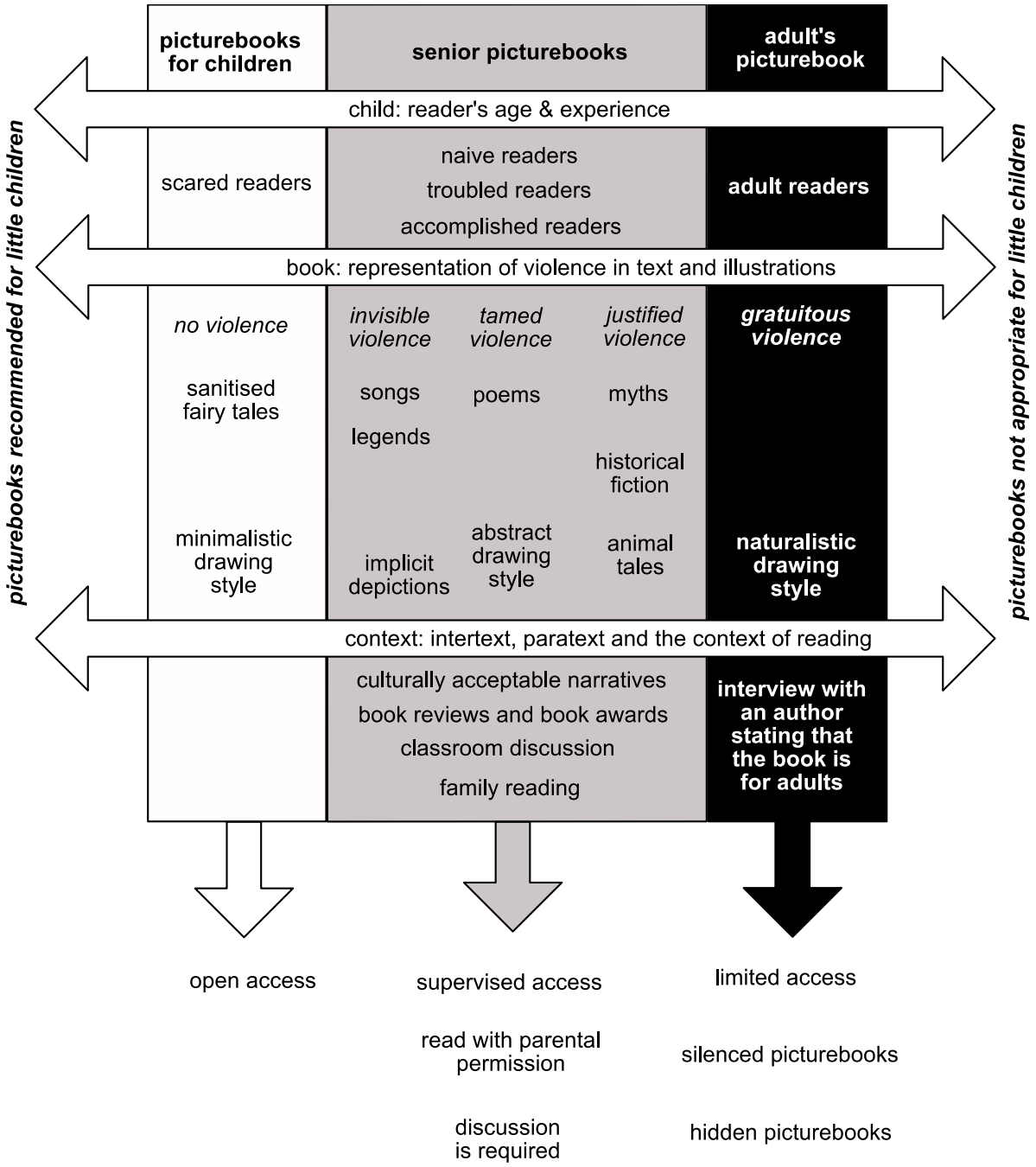
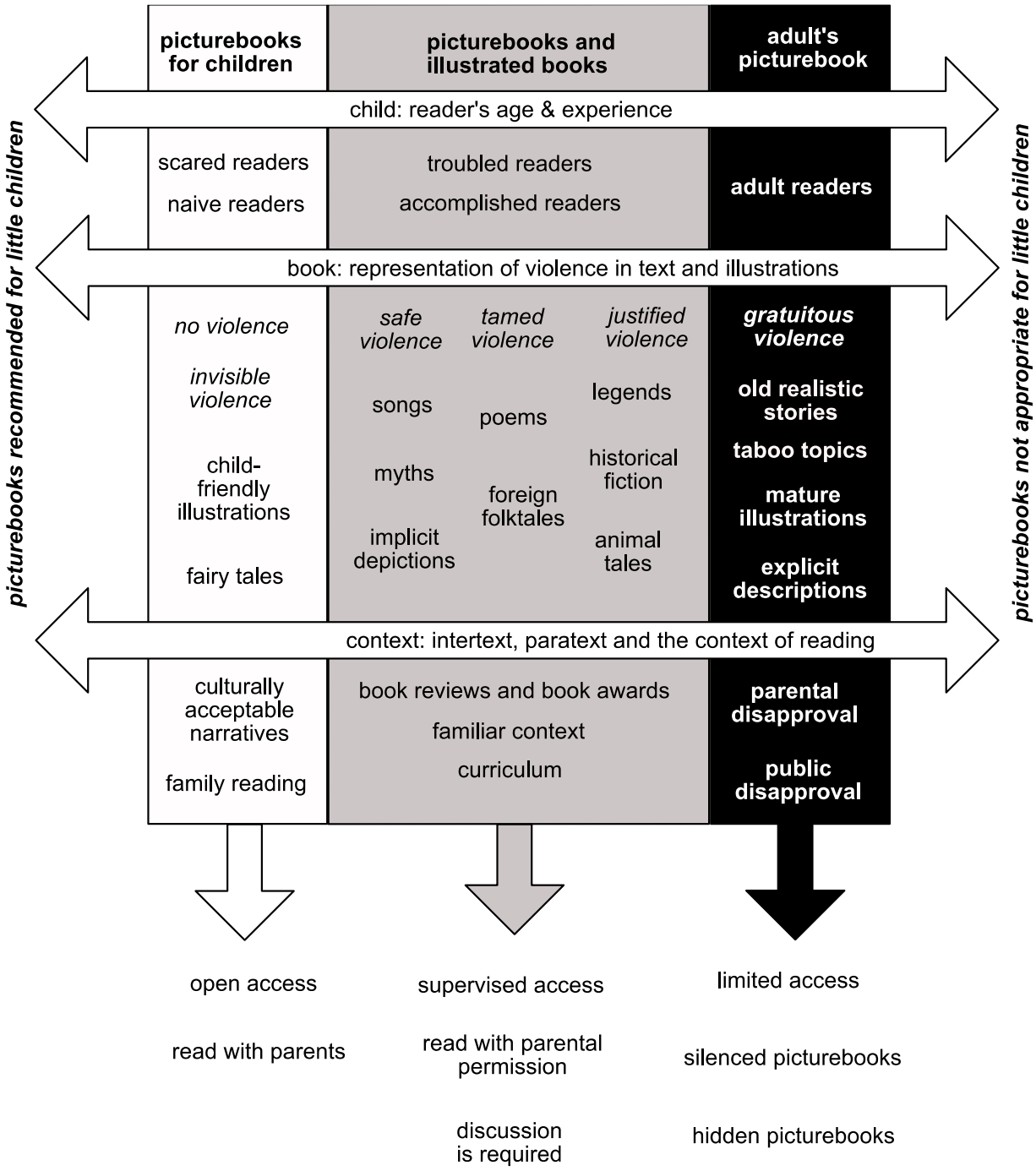


Figure 12

Curating Picturebooks Representing Violence in Ukraine



Chapter 5. Discussion

The main aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of how gatekeepers of CL in an educational context, who belong to different cultural backgrounds, curate picturebooks that represent violence and how they supervise young readers who have access to these books. To achieve this goal, I explore gatekeepers' perceptions of children who read picturebooks representing violence. Also, I look at how levels of fictionality created by genre, characters and settings influence the borders of appropriateness set by the gatekeepers. In addition, I explore the roles of culture in the process of interpreting fictional violence in the Australian and Ukrainian picturebooks. The Discussion Chapter discusses the implications of the study's findings in relation to the extant literature to address the five research questions. The main question is: how do gatekeepers of CL in educational settings, who belong to different national cultures, perceive fictional violence, curate picturebooks representing violence and guide young readers? This research question includes the following queries:

1) Who are the gatekeepers of children's literature in educational settings in Australia and Ukraine?

2) What categories of ideal child readers are constructed by gatekeepers of children's literature in the context of reading picturebooks representing violence?

3) What are the defining features of a picturebook representing violence that influence gatekeepers' decisions about its age-appropriateness?

4) What are the differences and similarities between gatekeepers' perceptions of fictional violence in picturebooks in Australia and Ukraine? What is the role of culture when judging violence in picturebooks?

5.1. Gatekeeping and Guardianship in Children's Literature

RQ: Who are the gatekeepers of children's literature in educational settings in Australia and Ukraine?

There are several key players in CL gatekeeping. Deciding on age-appropriateness of a picturebook is a complex process involving more than one camp. Beckett (2012) notes that contemporary authors and illustrators often aim at creating picturebooks that "can address any or all age groups" (p. 3), whereas publishers usually try to define the specific age group recommended for a particular book. Yet, apparently, the publishers are not alone in their urge to construct age limits for picturebook readership. This study demonstrates that teachers, librarians and parents also act both as guardians and gatekeepers in educational settings. The finding confirms Townsend's (1971) belief that parents, teachers or librarians are major stakeholders who decide what children should or should not read. This work resonates with Hollindale's (1974) conclusion that "children come across books in a relatively small number of places: in public libraries, at school and at home … many children come across books only at school" (p. 26). Hollindale suggests that teachers are the primary guides for children into the world of literature. This belief has been confirmed by the Australian participants of this study who also thought that teachers play a major role in gatekeeping CL through recommending age-appropriate books to children and helping them to interpret meanings in those books using group discussions. Furthermore, the Australian teachers often were expected to ask children if they were comfortable discussing a picturebook featuring violence (e.g., war). At the same time, the responses of Ukrainian participants often contradicted Hollindale's findings. Parental authority to select and interpret books for children seemed to be particularly strong in Ukraine where parents were expected to decide if their children are going to be comfortable with reading a book.

Librarians play a significant role in the gatekeeping of children literature. Bottigheimer (2010) says that similar to other stakeholders, "the librarians who admit and welcome young readers [are] also acting as influential gatekeepers in the process" (p. 260). The status of librarians was similar in both countries: they were perceived as gatekeepers, guardians, and advisers; however, their power was limited to a certain extent by parental

authority. In Australia, librarians would generally ask a child to provide them with oral or written parental approval if a child wanted to borrow a controversial picturebook. In Ukraine, librarians would recommend books to parents and warn them if the books were controversial, as parents were often expected to supervise children's choice of books. In both countries, librarians have to follow guidelines and are supported by library associations: ALIA in Australia, and ULA in Ukraine.

Interviewed teachers, librarians and parents perceived themselves as guardians of child readers in both countries. Some of them believed that it was their duty to protect children from unpleasant truths. Indeed, as (Nodelman (2008) explains, "adults commonly believed children need … protection, both from knowledge and from experience. From this point of view CL exists in order to offer children this protection, to exclude things they ought not to know about" (p. 158). The Australian perspective on gatekeeping often resembled the view discussed in the English academic literature, namely, "why show things as they actually exist, some adults will ask; the adult role is not at all to show children what actually exists, but to protect children and their presumed innocence from that reality for as long as possible" (Mercier, 2011, p. 201). Consequently, Australian participants generally perceived themselves as guardians – protectors responsible for a child's emotional comfort – whose role was to ensure that children are not scared or upset. The Ukrainian participants agreed with their Australian counterpart and said that, indeed, adults must protect children. However, their views on what children should be protected from differed. The majority of Ukrainian participants were convinced that children must know the truth even if the truth is upsetting, and that children should be protected from ignorance, not from truth. Indeed, as Nodelman & Reimer (2003) say "in trying to protect children, however, these [overprotective] adults may well be doing more harm than good … ignorance is always likely to do more harm than knowledge can" (p. 102). Thus, the Ukrainian participants perceived themselves, in general, as guardians of child readers who care about the child's social, moral and emotional development. One of the possible explanations is that the Ukrainian participants favoured family reading over classroom discussions. As a result, the argument for them would be that if certain scenes in a book upset children, their parents would be there to comfort and console them as well as to tailor the interpretation of fictional violence in accordance with the children's sensitivity. However, the parents or other guardians were also expected to explain to a child why a particular scene is significant from the socio-

cultural or ethical point of view. This is understandable if one takes into account that "the significance deduced from a text — its theme, moral, insight into behaviour and so on — is never without an ideological dimension or connotation" (Stephens, 1992, p. 2). Consequently, books written for children often contain both obvious and "less obvious social and ethical ideologies" (Stephens 1992, p. 3). The picturebooks representing violence might convey more nuanced and less obvious ideologies and require more interpretive work from the readers; however, it seems that the Ukrainian gatekeepers believed it was important to explain those nuanced messages even to young children. This finding is important because it challenges the common belief that adult gatekeepers simply limit the child's access to certain books; it demonstrates that actually gatekeepers act in more subtle and complex ways and that the ways in which they protect children strongly depend on culture. Also, this finding suggests that Ukrainian and Australian gatekeepers have different views about the responsibilities of schools and of families when it comes to reading controversial picturebooks.

The interviewed gatekeepers described a number of strategies they used to curate books and supervise children's access to books. In Australia, picturebooks representing violence were tagged as *senior* and sometimes placed on shelves with limited access or on *hidden shelves*. In Ukraine, picturebooks representing violence were available on open access shelves. However, these books were moved to limited access shelves if they triggered public disapproval. Gatekeepers from both countries claimed they would give a controversial picturebook to a young child only with explicit parental permission. However, the Australian participants seemed to be slightly more protective and would require parental permission even for upper-primary- school children, while the Ukrainian teachers and librarians would not. The reason for this might be that in countries like Australia, librarians may be fired because of parent complaints (Booth, 2011). In Australia, the books were expected to be discussed with a group of children in a classroom. Several Australian participants said that a safe and empathetic environment is essential for such discussions. In Ukraine, one-to-one conversations with children were preferred to group discussions. Parents were expected to help children to choose books, to discuss books with children and to ensure children could cope with the topic mentally and emotionally.

The participants from Australia and Ukraine interviewed for the study did not perceive themselves as censors. They explained that they simply supervised a child's access

to books and curated books. Most often they would not limit access to books entirely. The Australian participants generally claimed that due to school policies, topics like suicide could be avoided in the recommended reading lists and would not be discussed in a classroom; however, books on this topic and other sensitive topics were still available on limited access shelves and given on request. Although the Australians did not like the idea of censorship, some of the research participants said they sometimes had to censor picturebooks with disturbing topics to protect children.

In Ukraine, censorship or limiting a child's access to books was often perceived as unwanted structural violence. This cultural difference can be explained by historical and political reasons. The Ukrainian participants were likely to perceive censorship as *structural violence* and as an extremely negative phenomenon due to the Ukrainian history (see Valuev Circular and Ems Decree in Section 1.7.2.) and because "censorship is forbidden" ["цензура заборонена"] (Ukrainian Constitution. art. I § 15) by the Ukrainian Constitution. For this reason, the word censorship is highly likely to be associated with political censorship in Ukraine. Therefore, even if the Ukrainian participants limited children's access to controversial picturebooks in exceptional cases, they were not likely to use the terms *censor* or *censorship* to refer to their actions.

To conclude, the study showed that the interviewed teachers and librarians acted as the main gatekeepers of CL and the guardians of child readers in educational settings. They decided on the age-appropriateness of a book, curated books, supervised children's access to books, read to children, and facilitated the discussion of controversial books with children. In Australia, the interviewed teachers and librarians were responsible for selecting books for the library collection and for curating books; however, they believed that they shared their guardianship responsibilities with parents and parental approval was sought if a child wanted to borrow a picturebook representing violence. When reading books to and with children, the Australian teachers and librarians perceived their role as guides and facilitators of group discussion. They also felt they were responsible for ensuring that children were comfortable with the content.

In Ukraine, the interviewed teachers and librarians also perceived themselves as book selectors, curators, gatekeepers and young readers' guardians. In addition, the librarians believed that their major role was to recommend books to both children and parents. The parental role in selecting appropriate reading for their children and explaining

any controversial moments was seen as paramount. Finally, most Ukrainian research participants believed that their role was to explain the moral of the story to children and interpret violence for them. In contrast to Australia, one-to-one conversations were favoured over group discussions. The novelty of these findings is in showing that the gatekeepers' roles are complex and unique for each cultural context. Not only do gatekeepers want to protect children; they also consider a wide range of risks and benefits when selecting books. Their aim is to ensure that children are safe, but also educated and well-informed, as well as morally and emotionally developed.

Gatekeepers in both countries employed a complex process of decision making to select picturebooks suitable for young readers. The process included three dimensions: child-centred, book-centred and contextual elements. The three dimensions complemented each other and usually a gatekeeper considered all three dimensions when deciding on an age-appropriateness of a picturebooks. However, individual gatekeepers paid attention to slightly different aspects within each dimension.

5.2. Thinking of the Young Readers: Frightening and Upsetting Fictional Violence

RQ: What categories of ideal child readers are constructed by gatekeepers of children's literature in the context of reading picturebooks representing violence?

The Child-centred dimension is one of the three dimensions in a decision-making process undertaken by gatekeepers to select appropriate and useful books for children. To follow a child-oriented approach is a well-established practice in education. Dewey believed that a teacher must know children well before teaching them anything (Mooney, 2000). This idea can be translated into the relationship between the young readers and the gatekeepers: the gatekeeper should know a child before recommending or reading them a book.

Picturebook selection at schools and public libraries is a process driven by a gatekeeper's desire to attend to the educational needs, interests and emotional wellbeing of young readers in accordance with their age. The research participants believed that, up

until a certain age, young children are not ready to comprehend certain topics mentally and emotionally. This belief resonates with extensive research on the stages of a child's physical, mental and moral development (Coles, 2000; Erikson, 1950; Forman, 1983; Piaget, 1950, 1955). In fact, the age groups indicated by the participants are rather similar to those described by Erikson and Piaget. The current study confirms that traditional beliefs about children's development have remained strong in Australia and Ukraine. Furthermore, previous research in the field of librarianship states that the criteria for selecting books and developing children's and youth library collections are "age, ability, educational needs, and reading interests" (Rothbauer et al., 2010, p. 137). The current study reveals that gatekeepers in both countries generally take not only their own educational values, but also readers' preferences into account. Where controversial CL is concerned, the two defining criteria that gatekeepers apply are the maturity and sensitivity of the child readers.

Maturity is a concept used by participants to refer to a child's age, experience and mental ability to comprehend complex matters. Most research participants believed that picturebooks representing violence often included abstract and complex ideas, and consequently, young readers were expected to be mature enough to understand the meanings conveyed by words and images. Indeed, as Heins (2007) pinpoints, children are believed to be "insufficiently mature or socialised to understand and resist the ideas that a majority of adults think are not good for them" (p. 12). By contrast, Evans (2015) claims that "the maturity shown by children as they read, think about and respond to challenging texts is often quite amazing; they can cope with and respond to both real-life and picturebook problems in a manner that adults frequently have found almost unbelievable" (p. 7). It should be noted, however, that Evans did her research with children who were 9 years old. The majority of Australian and Ukrainian participants in this research generally believed children to be mature enough to understand complex ideas at the age of 8 and older.

Children's sensitivity was another marker for deciding whether books were appropriate for readers. Teachers and librarians were concerned about the emotional responses of young readers to picturebooks. Many reported that, before recommending a particular book, they would want to know if the child possessed the resilience and emotional intelligence skills to cope with challenging topics. In Ukraine, a child's sensitivity was seen as an aspect of the child's personality. As a result, gatekeepers believed that some children enjoy being scared by horror books and should have the right to access these books

once they were mature enough (often at the age of 7, when the abstract thinking skills were developed or at the older age).

Ukrainian participants also believed that children must know the truth about reality, even if reality was upsetting. They implied that picturebooks representing violence could be used to teach emotional intelligence, empathy and compassion. Their views were in line with those of Kokkola (2018), who states that learning to read characters' emotions by looking at their face expressions, body posture, words and actions allows reader to practice emotional intelligence skills safely. After all, readers may use fictional characters "to practice new emotional situations" (Vermeule, 2012, p. xii). Furthermore, when a reader observes the emotional states of fictional characters, emotional literacy is being developed and empathy is being trained; in this case, empathy refers to "the ability to understand and respect other people's feelings" (Nikolajeva, 2018, p. 83).

In Australia, it was believed that *sensitive readers* are children who experienced trauma or other upsetting events in the past. Trauma is a psychological response to an event which "results from an event that an individual interprets as severely threatening or harmful to her or her emotional or physical well-being that produces persistent impairments" (Simon, 2020 et al., p. 3) Consequently, the research participants often explained that it was better to protect all children from disturbing topics up until a certain age, and to keep protecting the sensitive readers for as long as necessary. Although the Australian participants generally believed that children should not be upset, they agreed that picturebooks representing violence could be used to teach empathy and compassion.

Children's levels of maturity and sensitivity were used as the cornerstones to construct four categories of ideal children who read picturebooks representing violence: *naïve, scared, troubled*, and *accomplished* readers. Although the participants did not explicitly say they categorised children in this way, their beliefs and opinions about children could be conceptualised as these types of readers. Naïve and accomplished readers were less sensitive about reading picturebooks representing violence than scared and troubled readers. Troubled and accomplished readers were perceived as more mature. The age limits were flexible. Naïve readers were likely to be less than 7 years old; scared readers were usually younger than 12; troubled readers were likely to be more than 7, and accomplished readers were often older than 12. However, the borders between age categories were

flexible; each induvial child had their own levels of maturity and sensitivity. Furthermore, the same child could act as a scared or troubled reader when reading one book and as a naïve or accomplished reader when reading another. These categories are useful for explaining how gatekeepers perceived young readers and how they wanted to guide and supervise those readers in accordance with their perceptions.

Very young children who were willing to read scary or controversial stories, but were unlikely to be affected by them, were perceived by gatekeepers as *naïve* readers. Some Australian participants said in some cases such children would not even notice the violence in the story; if they did notice it, they would not understand its meaning and the scene would not give them nightmares. Likewise, some Ukrainian participants emphasised that not only did some children have no fear of scary tales, but they actually enjoyed the frightening elements in the narratives. The majority of Australian and Ukrainian participants believed that if children did not have enough knowledge or experience to understand a situation, they would not see it as violent; therefore, it would be appropriate to show the book to children. The children would be blissfully ignorant and unaffected by the story. Similar reasoning can be found in academic literature. Evans (2015) claims that lack of personal experience actually makes it easier for young readers to cope with difficult problems described in picturebooks. She gives an example of a 9-year-old girl and an 89-year-old veteran reading the same picturebook about the Holocaust and responding to it differently. At the same time, the alternative view was also present. Some Australian and Ukrainian participants believed that naïve readers have to be protected precisely because they are ignorant and innocent. Their argument was as follows: if children do not possess enough knowledge and experience to understand the situation, they should not be shown the book; they are not ready for this material yet. The idea of protecting *immature* youth can be traced back to the 17th century. Heins (2007) follows Ariès's landmark work *Centuries of Childhood* (1962) in pointing out that approaches to child-rearing and education changed dramatically from the 17th century onward. Children started to be perceived as sexually innocent and in need for protection. For example, the statutory ages of sexual consent changed from 10 or 12 to 14, 16, 18, or 21 in certain states of the USA by the end of the 19th century (Heins 2007, p. 26). Although Heins's research is concerned with censoring sexually explicit material, and not with violence, it is clear that there is a connection. The change in perceiving children and childhood has had implications for beliefs concerning what children

should and should not read. One way to protect immature minds is, arguably, to take care of a child's emotional wellbeing by controlling what they do and do not read.

Scared readers can be perceived as sensitive and vulnerable counterparts of naïve readers. The concept can be compared and contrasted with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's idea of *the natural child*. Booth (2011) explains that because the natural child was expected to be innocent and vulnerable, censorship in CL takes its beginning precisely when adults start to believe that books can be *harmful* and children need to be *protected*. The participants in the present study explained that if the child was afraid of the story, they would protect them by altering events in the story or by stopping reading the book. It was believed that very young children might not be able to understand the difference between reality and fiction. Therefore, if some characters were harming others or being harmed themselves, the child-reader was likely to be *scared*. Current research shows that children older than 3 understand the difference between reality and fiction and if they are not encouraged by adults to believe in fictional characters (e.g., Santa Claus), most probably they will not (Carick & Quas, 2006; Sharon & Wooley, 2004). Furthermore, if the story present events which evoke negative emotions, young children are more likely to believe that the entire story is fictional and it never took place in reality. It is said that "when the fantasy elicits fear or negative arousal, [3 to 5 years old] children shift their attention back to the information's origin to remind themselves that the information is not real. Such attentional shifting serves to reduce children's arousal" (Carick & Quas, 2006, p. 1258). Meanwhile, the fear of frightening little children when reading a book is a well-documented phenomenon; such fear may lead to more careful book selection or even censorship. For example, Stephan Prickett described the reading experience of British poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, born in 1772, like this:

> At six years old he had read *Robinson Crusoe* and turned to the *Arabian Nights*, which so frightened him that he was, he tells us, "haunted by spectres" whenever he was alone in the dark. His father was so alarmed by the effects of this precocious reading that he confiscated all his son's books of fairy-stories and burned them. (Prickett, 2004, p. 174)

Another account of censoring a book for the reason that it might frighten a young reader is described by Lurie (1990) who noted that *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak, a picturebook implying emotional violence, was perceived by adults as too frightening. Lurie askes, "frightening for whom?" (p. 14). Her question remains relevant. Evans (2015) attempts to answer it by stating that "responding to challenging and controversial picture books is not something that children are afraid of. It is more likely to be adults - parents, teachers and carers - who are unwilling, indeed incapable of making relevant, mature responses" (p. xi). The current study confirms that some adults might feel unprepared to read scary tales to very young children. This is understandable. As mentioned earlier, children of the same age might response to the same book differently depending on their personality: some will act as naïve readers and will not be affected, others will be frightened. Furthermore, the same child might respond to picturebooks representing distinct types of violence differently depending on their personal experience with violence.

Troubled readers were another category of child-readers who appeared to be in need for protection. Most of the time, it was believed that children who are 7-8 years old or older were ready to comprehend abstract ideas and to emotionally cope with fictional acts of violence (e.g., one character killing another). However, if the individual level of sensitivity to certain topics was high, it was believed the readers could be worried, distressed or troubled by reading a picturebook representing violence. To decide if the reader is sensitive or not, the participants would consider readers' personality traits (the majority of Ukrainian participants) and their experiences with violence (the majority of Australian participants). A few participants suggested that reading and discussing picturebooks representing violence might serve as a strategy for overcoming traumatic experience and could be beneficial for troubled readers. The experience of using picturebooks representing violence to work with trauma is comparatively new. However, there is some evidence in literature that professionals successfully use folk and fairy tales during therapy sessions with traumatised children (Aleksandr Mendoza, 2018; Fernandes et al., 2020; Walters, 2017). Picturebooks representing violence may be used for the same purpose. For instance, Bjorvand (2010) describes the case of *Angry Man* (2003), a Norwegian picturebook representing domestic violence, which was written by the family counselor Oivind Aschjem as a part of a project titled "Alternative to Violence". The scholar explains that the book is suitable for therapy with children who experience domestic violence and for their families.

One more category of young readers of picturebooks representing violence is that of *accomplished* readers. Accomplished readers are mature enough, able to manage emotions without external help and to absorb socio-cultural values through reading complex and challenging stories. Readers may become accomplished by engaging with CL which gradually prepares them for more challenging and ambiguous topics. Hintz (2020) explains that:

> The history of children's literature reflects this ongoing tension between children's books preserving and promoting a 'childlike' quality, and children's books as a way to push children towards adulthood. There has always been a strand of children's literature that does not seek to enable the child 'to be a child' but to move him or her as quickly as possible into a state of maturity. (Hintz, 2020, p. 44)

Books promoting *childlike* traits are, presumably, picturebooks accompanied by child-friendly illustrations and portraying no death, violence or sex, whereas, books that guide children *into a state of maturity* are those that explore controversial and challenging topics. Folktales can be a good example of the latter. Stephens (2010b) claims that folktales can prepare children for adult life; characters who engage in questionable behaviour, including violence and deception, may be a metaphor for people whom the child will encounter later in life:

> The hero's journey, whether physical or symbolic, is a rite of passage through which the self may evolve. [In the *Jack and the Beanstalk*,] Jack's three trips to the ogre's castle, for example, may be seen as symbolic indicators of maturation: on the first, he steals a bag of gold to meet an immediate need; on the second, he steals a suitable investment, the hen that lays golden eggs, and on the third visit, inspired more by curiosity than need, he steals a cultural artefact, the golden harp. Thus, the plenitude which is the expected outcome of a folktale hero's adventure seems to be shaped as a developmental process. (177-178)

Unlike scared readers who could be afraid of the giant, or troubled readers who might read the text literally and feel sorry for the giant who was robbed and murdered, accomplished readers would be able to understand the metaphorical layer of the story. Listening to texts like *Jack and the Beanstalk* children develop an ability to recognise the metaphors, allegories and other figurative language used in tales, poetry and other genres adopted by picturebooks. Despite the potential benefits gained from developing abstract thinking skills, some visual and verbal representations of violence are still perceived by gatekeepers as inappropriate for children; however, such decision is a complex interpretive act, not a prohibition.

When making the observations that enabled me to see them as constructing four categories of ideal reader, the gatekeepers mostly focused on such emotions as fear, anxiety and sadness. This partially reflects the views found in academic literature. Booth (2011) explains that teachers and librarians "censor material to avoid frightening or saddening children, or to avoid introducing controversy into their classroom" (p. 28). Although the participants of the study mostly disagreed with the idea that they were censoring, they certainly linked controversial topics in books to the emergence of negative emotions in readers. The risk of scaring or upsetting a young reader was a common concern, and it was found across both of the discussed cultures. However, the responses of the Australian and Ukrainian gatekeepers differed. The Australian participants usually preferred to avoid evoking negative emotions at any cost. Indeed, scholars suggest that readers may identify with a traumatising event as a result of seeing its representation in art, literature and mass media (Kaplan, 2005; Weissman, 2004), and this might have been a concern for the Australian participants. The Ukrainian participants, on the other hand, believed that some children might enjoy reading scary stories for the same reasons adults do: to experience the pleasure of the sublime where "the pain of terror is lost in amazement … [and where] the terrible [is] joined with the marvellous" (Aikin, 2004 [1773], p. 32-33). Furthermore, some Ukrainian participants believed that the benefits of gaining new knowledge and fostering emotional intelligence outweighed the risk of upsetting children.

Landsberg (2003) says that although it is possible to form prosthetic memories of traumatic events which a person has not lived through by watching movies, reading books or engaging with other types of mass media, the prosthetic memories actually may "help to condition how an individual thinks about the world, and might be instrumental in generating

empathy and articulating an ethical relation to the other" (p. 149). Therefore, reading about characters going through challenging events might have a positive outcome. Coats (2004) reminds us that "the only way we come to make sense of the world is through the stories we are told. They pattern the world we have fallen into, effectively replacing its terrors and inconsistencies with structured images that assure us of its manageability" (p. 1). Therefore, child readers who feel upset about a character's tribulations might learn how to empathise and might gain a better understanding of the world.

Not only children's emotions influenced gatekeepers' decisions. Their own emotions impacted the decision-making process too. Whereas fear and sadness were perceived as emotions experienced by children reading disturbing picturebooks, disgust and anger were emotions sometimes experienced by the gatekeepers. One Australian participant said she would not recommend a book describing a boy eating himself (self-inflicted violence) because she found it disgusting. In addition, some Ukrainian participants said that the illustration representing a fight scene in *Blossom Possum* (2006) was ugly, unpleasant and repulsive. Previous research shows that disgust intensifies the amplitude of moral judgement; consequently, people who feel disgust are more likely to condemn the morally ambiguous behaviour which evokes that sensation (Ivan, 2015; Schnall et al., 2008). The research also shows that if a situation involves harm and injustice, the observer's moral judgement is influenced by anger (Cannon et al., 2011; Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). Indeed, the Australian and the Ukrainian participants mentioned that some picturebooks representing violence caused parents to feel anger, and to object against their children reading the picturebooks. Disgust and anger lead to different results. Hutcherson and Gross (2011) explained that anger usually motivates people to take an action (to stop the offender and to protect the victim), whereas disgust often results in withdrawal from the offensive situation and avoidance of it. Moreover, the effect of anger could be mitigated by apologies, whereas the effect of *moral disgust* was often long-lasting and could influence a person's moral judgement irreversibly. These studies have implications for my research: gatekeepers of CL were preoccupied with the emotional response of child readers; however, they themselves were influenced by such emotions as disgust and anger when judging picturebooks representing violence.

5.3. Magic of Words and Pictures: Safe, Justified and Gratuitous Fictional Violence

RQ: What are the defining features of a picturebook representing violence that influence gatekeepers' decisions about its age-appropriateness?

The book-centred dimension of the decision-making process accompanying gatekeepers' choices of books for children complemented the child-centred dimension. To select appropriate picturebooks, the interviewed teachers and librarians paid attention to such picturebook features as genre, characters, settings and illustrations – all of which possessed a certain level of fictionality. In addition to these features, the gatekeepers evaluated the amount and purpose of violence in the picturebooks under consideration. Finally, the presence or absence of a happy ending also influenced the gatekeepers' perceptions: fictional violence was seen as palatable if the story left room for hope and conveyed an important moral message.

The level of fictionality was among the major factors influencing the decision about the palatability of a picturebook representing violence. If participants believed that the story might be perceived by child readers as entirely fictional, unreal and impossible, the violence in the story would be seen as *palatable*. After all, if the entire story is a fiction, then violence is a fantasy as well. Fictionality would manifest itself through styles of writing and drawing as well as through the choice of genre, characters, settings and the connection to contemporary or historical events. Picturebooks representing violence were more likely to be seen as a useful reading if they depicted a fictional reality with imaginary settings and characters. For example, fictional adventures with colourful dragons, magical castles, poetic language and elements of violence could be seen as acceptable by gatekeepers, whereas realistic books about war with bleak and naturalistic illustrations would usually by considered to be inappropriate for young readers. Hollindale (1974) explains that realistic books depicting violence are much more harmful for young readers than entirely fictional books. To support his claim, he uses examples of such war novels for adults as *The Scourge of the Swastika* and *The Knights of Bushido* by Lord Russell and says:

> The boys I taught who had read these books were chiefly interested in the details of near-naked figures being whipped or racked or otherwise tortured and mutilated. Far from being indignant about it all, they were intrigued and stimulated by the sub-human behaviour these exhibited. It is perfectly common for adolescent boys to indulge in fantasies of violence, and for most boys such books provide a harmless if gruesome excitement which will soon give place to more innocent and practical carnalities. For a few, however, they are an experience of sado-masochistic relish which may lastingly inhibit sexual and emotional growth. (Hollindale, 1974, pp. 20-21)

Moreover, Hollindale contrasts these two novels with the *James Bond* series by Ian Fleming, claiming that the latter would not be harmful. He explains, "The difference is that Fleming's amiable folk tales are fiction: they take place in a meticulously documented nowhere which existed only in Fleming's curious imagination. I would not recommend the James Bond books, but I would not proscribe them either" (Hollindale, 1974, p. 21). His explanation is also an example of adult's response to violence in books: realistic and explicit representations of violence are censored, and fictional violence may be silenced.

The level of fictionality in illustrations was considered too. The participants paid attention to the style of drawing, the visual representation of settings and the appearance of characters – factors which could create a sense of familiarity or alienation in the reader. For example, an abstract character positioned on white space with hardly any setting would look more fictional than realistically drawn characters within detailed naturalistic settings representing a concrete time and place. If the illustration looks very abstract or minimalistic, the level of alienation is usually higher (Painter et al., 2013), which means the reader is less likely to treat characters as real individuals and feel empathy toward them. Consequently, an act of violence against an abstract and highly fictional character seems to be more palatable than the same act against a realistic character.

Although several participants thought young children are incapable of understanding metaphor, research says that the opposite is true. "Symbolic language is something that a young child seems to understand almost viscerally; metaphoric speech is the child's own speech" (p. 18), says Yolen (1981), referring to the fact that children themselves play games in which reality is constantly transformed by their imagination while they know the

difference between the two. Similarly, Nikolajeva (2002) says, “children’s fiction is basically about play. It can be serious and dangerous play, involving killing dragons in a faraway mythical world, but young characters are inevitably brought back to the security of home and the protection of adults” (p. 206). Current research in psychology confirms that children, indeed, understand that reality and fiction (e.g., games, fairy tale characters) have different properties in comparison to reality. In fact, children start noticing a distinction between fiction and reality as early as at the age of 3 despite the old belief that this happens for most children around the age of 12 (Wooley & Ghossainy, 2013). Therefore, even if children choose to play games and pretend they believe in their fantasy creations, they usually understand that fiction and reality are not the same.

Genre expectations influence the perception of violence too. The genres of CL that work with highly fictional and imaginary reality (e.g., fairy tales) usually can afford a greater scale of violence than more realistic genres (e.g., realistic novels). The majority of Australian and Ukrainian participants agreed that fictional violence appears to be *safer* in picturebooks with stories written in genres like fantasy, fairy tales, legends or myths in contrast to fictional violence in picturebooks with lower levels of fictionality such as realistic stories. Stories depicting the historical past tend to be treated as mostly realistic stories that have a medium level of fictionality. On the one hand, historical events were perceived as distant; it was impossible that they should happen today; they were therefore safe. On the other hand, picturebooks representing historical events often had dark and gloomy illustrations drawn in a naturalistic style. Furthermore, their realistic plots could seem to be believable and therefore frightening or upsetting. Australian participants expected fairy tales to be brutal and violent. However, such fictional violence in fairy tales still did not look extremely horrifying to the majority of participants.

The fictional reality of fairy tales might look safer to some gatekeepers because ethical and moral problems usually have a single clear solution in the imaginary world: there is good and there is evil; nothing exists between good and evil; good must triumph and evil must be punished. Realistic literature presents its readers with a more complex, ambiguous and unpredictable world where right and wrong are contextual. Indeed, recognising a non-binary nature of the world with its ambiguity and complexity is a marker of maturity. As a result, the binary frame makes fictional violence to be more suitable for mature readers. As Mercier (2011) notes, the idea that a young reader must accept the ambiguity of realistic

characters, none of whom deserve triumph or punishment, "troubles some gatekeepers—and delights others—as readers of realistic fiction move out of adult mediation, away from protection, away from innocence" (p. 201). Consequently, any fictional work where reality is simplified to *good versus evil* seems to be tolerated by gatekeepers even if this work represents violence.

Often the contrast between good and evil is represented through typical antagonists. In Western literature these may, for example, be a wolf and a dragon: a wolf in fairy tales is often expected to be punished for being bad, and a dragon in myths and legends is expected to be killed by a human hero. Reading about violence against the wolf or the dragon can be considered to be therapeutic rather than traumatising. The act of punishing the wolf for his wrongdoing is an act of justice, and, at the same time, it signals the narrative's disapproval of characteristics which the wolf represents. Ghosh (2015) notes that the wolf in Western fairy tales has been an embodiment of cruelty, deception, "fear, threat and danger" (p. 205). The Australian participants of this study confirmed that adults and children expect a wolf to be a *baddy* and to be punished, abused or even killed. The Ukrainian participants often said they felt pity for the wolf because he is a carnivorous animal and it is unfair to punish him for who he is. Killing a dragon, on the other hand, was approved by both Australian and Ukrainian participants. It was perceived as a symbolic act of gaining freedom from oppression and an opportunity for a hero to face some danger. Cashdan (1999) explains that the witch, or any similar character, must die to empower children and to help them to develop their moral compass. It is said that often fairy tales encourage children to overcome such vices as vanity, envy, greed, deceit, greed and others by the symbolic act of killing a negative character representing those traits. Therefore, the act of killing a dragon could be interpreted as a victory of courage and humanity over greed and other vices associated with negative characters.

Furthermore, the purpose that was served by the fictional violence played a role in determining gatekeepers' judgement of it. If an act of violence served to defend one's life, one's land or one's community, it was perceived as justifiable. Hamby (2017) argues that an act can be perceived as violent only if it is harmful, unwanted, intentional and nonessential. Likewise, what gatekeepers saw as an essential act of self-defence was seldom seen as violence (or, at least, unnecessary violence) by the research participants. By contrast, violence for violence's sake was seen as gratuitous and inappropriate.

Many participants stated that visual and verbal representations of violence were equally important when deciding if the picturebook should be read by a child. Seeing words and pictures as equally valuable for interpreting the story has been a recognised practice in CL criticism (Arizpe & Styles, 2016; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006; Nikolajeva, 2010; Nodelman et al., 2017; Pantaleo, 2008). The illustrations were perceived by the participants as very important because they could convey their meanings to the reader immediately. It has been argued that to interpret an illustration, one should consider a number of its features, including the representations of characters, their actions and the settings, as well as colours, shadows, lines, shapes, sizes, perspective, frames and text blocks (De Silva & Gaudin, 2011; Painter et al., 2013). When looking at illustrations representing violence in picturebooks, the research participants commented on only some elements of the visual representations. The defining features which would allow them to distinguish child-friendly illustrations from others were colour, style of drawing, settings and the appearance of the characters, especially their body position and face expressions. In some cases, the participants would comment on the illustrator's use of light and shadow, and on the size of the characters. An extremely realistic style of drawing was seen as too difficult to digest for young child readers. Painter et al. (2013) confirm this idea, explaining that very young children are better at comprehending a minimalist style of drawing (e.g., *Dr Seuss*) than a naturalistic style (e.g., *My Mother's Eyes* (2011)). By naturalistic is meant a style of drawing that is three-dimensional, involves the depiction of shadow and represents the complex emotions of characters. The colours, shadows, body positions and face expressions of the characters, clearly, set the mood in the picturebooks discussed.

The participants seemed to be rather troubled if an illustration depicting violence was painted in dark, grim and pessimistic colours, with many shadows, and if it showed characters displaying aggressive body language. These features were perceived as suitable only for mature readers. The term *mature illustrations* was coined by the participants to describe dark, unpleasant or even ugly images drawn in realistic style that featured negative face expressions of the characters. Conversely, illustrations drawn in a cartoonish style utilising light, vivid and bright colours and featuring smiling characters were perceived as *child-friendly*. Salisbury and Styles (2012) also note that publishers believe bright and vivid illustrations to be the most suitable for children; however, there is no empirical evidence to

support this claim (p. 113). At the same time, the observation that gatekeepers perceive dark and realistic illustrations as not very suitable for children is novel.

Finally, one of the prominent themes that emerged from the data was gatekeepers' belief that CL should give hope, and that if a story finishes with a happy ending, then the presence of violence is no longer an issue. In genres like fairy tales, the endings are usually happy because everyone's happiness depends on one single condition (Chesterton, 1908). For example, a princess has to guess a name of a little dwarf, and then all the unhappiness can be easily eliminated by one action such as killing a dragon. Furthermore, Nodelman explains that happy ending is an expected feature of CL, and "since a happy ending inevitably implies an optimistic view of reality, children's literature is characteristically hopeful and optimistic in tone" (Nodelman, 2008, p. 216). This way hope and happy endings are closely related in children's fiction; this study shows that both hope and happy ending were perceived as antidotes against fictional violence.

5.4. Power of Context: Invisible and Horrifying Fictional Violence

RQ: What are the differences and similarities between gatekeepers' perceptions of fictional violence in picturebooks in Australia and Ukraine? What is the role of culture when judging violence in picturebooks?

The child-centred and book-centred dimensions of gatekeepers' decision-making processes as they select books is complemented by a contextual dimension, because gatekeepers' decisions are also influenced by culturally specific contexts as well as the contexts where books are created, read and discussed. The research project brought to light two important ways in which culture influences perceptions of violence in children's picturebooks. First, if the stories representing violence are a part of folklore, violence can appear to be invisible. Second, if the stories touch upon culturally specific taboos, fictional violence can appear as horrifying and unacceptable. In addition to cultural influence, the contextual elements include book reviews, book awards, interviews, school policies, curricula, parental involvement and others.

The visibility of violence in the story was considered to be important by research participants. If violence was invisible, hidden or implicit, the majority of participants would not object to reading the book to children. The Ukrainian participants often believed that violence in fairy tales was invisible. The Australian participants held similar views about some picturebooks which can be regarded as British and Australian classics. However, when I presented the Ukrainian participants with a classical British picturebook loved by Australian participants (*Not Now, Bernard*), and the Australian participants with some Ukrainian fairy tales ("Kotyhoroshko"), many of them were horrified by the examples from the other culture. These two cases require some discussion.

Not Now, Bernard (1980) by David McKee, a British picturebook well known in Australia, was seen as hilarious in Australia and as horrifying and highly inappropriate in Ukraine. The difference in the Australian and the Ukrainian in responses can be explained as a consequence of the different historical memories of the two cultural communities. The Ukrainian participants were likely to inherit a memoryscape (Starovoyt, 2015) or collective memory of the Holodomor, also known as the Ukrainian Great Famine of 1932-1933, the artificial hunger caused by Soviet Union governmental policies and leading to mass starvation of Ukrainian peasants (Plokhy, 2015-2016). In 1933, peasants were deprived of food and of any opportunity to leave their village to search food elsewhere; as a result, millions starved to death (Marples, 2012). In some cases, starving people would eat grass, rats or animals which had died of disease (Melnychuk, 2012); in some exceptional cases, they would eat dead human bodies (Stasiuk, 2021). This historical event is described as the time when "the Ukrainians faced a slow, painful death and witnessed loved ones undergoing the same agonising deterioration. Survivors spoke of watching loved ones die and knowing they face the same fate. It was terrifying" (Melnychuk, 2012, p. 46). Thus, the extremely negative response of the Ukrainian participants to *Not Now, Bernard* (1980) could be attributed to the collective trauma (Starovoyt, 2015). The act of the monster eating Bernard could be seen to resemble the actions of desperate or mentally ill people who ate human flesh in 1932-1933. The Australian participants had mostly neutral or positive responses because for them *Not Now, Bernard* followed a familiar genre convention of stories about monsters. Perhaps the Australians associated the episode where Bernard was eaten by a monster with Roald Dahl's stories about monsters eating children, or other

similar fictional tales. The interpretation of this literary motif has been explained in the following way:

> Roald Dahl describes all the creatures that eat children. In this he touches that exciting, mythical world of fairy story in which people *like* to be frightened, up to the point, frightened for pleasure, for fear of reality. Eating is both a motif and a device … For the first few pages of *The Enormous Crocodile* he [Dahl] goes on about how children are 'juicy and yummy, luscious and muschious' … And the more he goes on, the more secure is the reader's sense that it's just a story. (Cullingford, 1998, p. 214)

Because the Australian participants thought that monsters could exist in fiction only, they did not have the same emotional response as their Ukrainian colleagues. Instead, many Australian participants thought the story was funny because of its absurdity and fictionality. Very few Ukrainian participants perceived the story in the same way.

Fairy tales were perceived by the Ukrainian participants as safe and suitable for very young readers; elements of fictional violence in such cases appeared to be invisible. By contrast, when presented with some Ukrainian fairy tales, most Australian participants said they would recommend them only to 9 or 10 year and older readers. A vivid example of this difference was the evaluation of the Ukrainian fairy tale "Kotyhoroshko" (2013), where the main character kills an evil dragon to save his siblings and sacrifices his calf to feed a magical bird who rescues him from dying; despite being betrayed by his closest friends and siblings, he returns home and forgives his wrongdoers. The Ukrainian participants said they had heard this tale many times and therefore had stopped noticing any violence in it, if there was any violence in it at all. One participant said it was important to explain children the importance of sacrificing one's time, attention, or goods for the benefit of others (see Section 4.5.1.). By contrast to *Not Now, Bernard* (1980) which could trigger the unconscious collective memory of the traumatic past, "Kotyhoroshko" (2013) was more likely to be read by Ukrainians in light of the "second-generation memory" (Ulanowicz, 2013), which can be defined as "a form of collective memory that involves an individual's conscious incorporation of her elders' memories of a traumatic past within her own mnemonic repertoire" (p. 4). Therefore, the oppression, and physical violence against oneself and

others, all of which were aimed at gaining freedom, could be tolerated by the Ukrainian gatekeepers due to the Ukrainian history. The Australian participants did not object the act of killing the dragon; however, they were slightly shocked by all the betrayals and by the scene where the hero cuts up his calf to feed the bird. This can be explained by the fact that the Australian participants encounter this story for the first time.

In addition to national culture, the important elements of contextual influence included school policies, school curricula and library collection development policies. Bucher and Hinton (2010) list a number of "strategies for selecting quality literature" for young readers. They state that teachers and librarians judge the appropriateness of the books by consulting book reviews, checking information about book awards and book lists, using their own judgement of the books' literary elements (e.g., plot, characters, settings, theme, point of view and style) and their knowledge of literary theory (gender and postcolonial issues). Indeed, similar contextual elements seemed to be significant to my informants when evaluating picturebooks representing violence in the process of book selection.

Furthermore, when selecting books for children, several participants suggested that the negative impact of some representations of violence could be mitigated in the process of reading. First, if parents are reading books to their children, they can use soft and comforting intonation (see Section 4.7.3.5.). Second, parents, teachers or librarians can help children to interpret the story by explaining any disturbing moments and answering children's questions. Finally, both strategies (soft intonation and discussing the book when reading) were seen as ways of teaching children empathy and compassion through reading a picturebook representing violence.

5.5. Summary

This section has discussed the major findings of the study. Several cultural differences between the Australian and Ukrainian perceptions can be identified. To begin with, the gatekeeping role of parents and teachers is perceived somewhat differently in Australia and Ukraine. Gatekeepers from both counties believe they should act as guardians of child readers and protect young readers. However, in Australia it is generally believed children should be protected from uncomfortable truths up until certain age, whereas in Ukraine, the gatekeepers have somewhat contradictory opinions. Some agree with the Australian

way of protecting child readers, while others say that children should be protected from ignorance, not from the truth of life. These differences can be linked to the expectation of the Ukrainian gatekeepers that parents should help teachers and librarians to discuss books with children. Some participants of the study believed that it is a parental responsibility to ensure that the child absorbs socio-cultural and moral values from books without feeling negative emotions: they expected parents to explain the significance of the story to their children and to comfort them if they become scared or upset.

Furthermore, the Australian and Ukrainian participants had different views on how to deal with picturebooks which might cause fear or sadness in children. First, the perception of picturebooks with potentially frightening content differed in Australia and Ukraine. In Australia, if a book was perceived as potentially evoking fear, the book was unlikely to be recommended in a library or to be read to children at school. In Ukraine, most librarians believed that just as adults enjoy reading horrors, some children might like really scary stories too. Consequently, the librarians were likely to recommend potentially scary stories to children if they saw that the particular children had a cheerful and resilient personalities (not anxious and sensitive). In addition, the risk of evoking sadness by reading a book was handled differently in Australia and Ukraine. The Australian research participants often said they would avoid upsetting children at all costs and would not recommend or read a book to a child if they thought the book might upset the child. By contrast, some Ukrainian participants said children should develop their emotional intelligence skills; they should learn how to feel sadness, empathy and compassion, and picturebooks evoking sadness can be a useful tool for this.

Genre expectations of picturebooks representing violence were also different in Australia and Ukraine. The most significant difference concerned fairy tales and realistic picturebooks representing war. Fairy tales were generally seen as safe and valuable by Ukrainian participants because they were believed to be a part of the country's culture; violence in fairy tales was often claimed to be invisible. By contrast, many Australian participants suggested a higher age limit for fairy tale readers, saying that fairy tales are often brutal and horrifying and that only sanitised versions of fairy tales are suitable for children. On the other hand, in Australia realistic narratives representing war were said to be a part of the conventional historic-cultural discourse and therefore generally acceptable in picturebooks, whereas in Ukraine they were considered to be potentially traumatising.

Consequently, the age limit for realistic narratives representing war was somewhat lower in Australian than in Ukraine. Moreover, some Australian participants said they are against reading those books because of their pacifistic views, and some Ukrainian participants said they were unlikely to recommend those books to, or read them with children because they were not sure how the child readers were affected by the contemporary war (e.g., if their parent had been killed or injured) or what parents had told their children about war.

The interpretation of violence by gatekeepers depended on a number of factors: the intended readership; levels of fictionality established by genres, characters, settings and illustrations; the amount, visibility and purpose of the violence represented; the context of reading; and the cultural backgrounds of the gatekeepers assessing the picturebook. The palatability of fictional violence can be seen as a continuum with rather appropriate representations on one end and highly inappropriate ones on the other. More or less palatable representations of violence include invisible, justifiable (or righteous) and tamed violence. Representations of violence in picturebooks which gatekeepers judged as inappropriate often encompassed horrifying, glorified and gratuitous fictional violence.

The novelty of this empirical study is in its exploration of the complex decision-making process necessary for selecting controversial picturebooks. This study may influence future research on children reading and discussing picturebooks representing violence. Furthermore, this study is able to show some significant differences between the ways in which representatives of Australian and Ukrainian cultures perceive the processes of book selection, gatekeeping and guardianship in CL.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This chapter summarises the major findings of the study, explains how the findings contribute to the theory of CL research and presents the implications for professional practice in education. Additionally, the limitations of the study are discussed and the possibilities for further research are presented. The last section of the chapter is a very brief overview of the entire study which reiterates the aims, the methods and methodology, the research questions as well as the conclusions.

6.1. The Major Research Findings

There are six major findings of the study. The first finding focuses on the gatekeepers of CL in educational settings – teachers, librarians and parents – and reveals some cross-cultural differences between the Australian and Ukrainian cultures. The second finding explains how the gatekeepers make their decisions on the age-appropriateness of picturebooks representing violence. It presents three dimensions of the decision-making process: child-centred, book-centred and contextual. The third finding explores categories of child readers constructed by the gatekeepers as they make their decisions. The fourth finding is concerned with the representations of violence in picturebooks. It shows the features of the book the gatekeepers pay attention to in the process of selecting useful and appropriate books for the library, school or home book collections. The fifth finding demonstrates how context influenced the research participants' perceptions of fictional violence. The sixth finding demonstrates subtle differences in picturebook curation in Australia and Ukraine.

6.1.1. Finding 1: Gatekeeping and Guardianship in Educational Settings

The research shows that teachers, librarians and parents act as the main gatekeepers of picturebooks and the guardians of young readers in educational settings. They make decisions about the age-appropriateness of books and they curate the picturebooks to which children have access. Although there are other professionals involved in the process of gatekeeping (e.g., principals, psychologists, scholars), this study focuses on teachers,

librarians and parents. The amount of authority each party possesses and the perceived roles of gatekeepers depend on the cultural context.

The Australian research participants claimed that teachers should select and recommend books to children because they know their students, they have the necessary skills to judge the books, and they know how to discuss the story in a helpful manner. They also believed that the librarians have the power to curate books: children may have open, limited or supervised assess to bookshelves. In Australia, parental approval is often sought by both teachers and librarians when working with books representing violence. However, there is no expectation that parents should discuss those books with children.

The Ukrainian research participants believed that librarians know their readers well enough to recommend suitable and appropriate books. Furthermore, the role of librarians in Ukraine often includes recommending books to both children and their parents because the parents want to actively participate in the process of selecting books. Moreover, the Ukrainian parents are expected to be the main gatekeepers – to select books and to read them with children. The librarians said they always warn parents if a picturebook contains a representation of violence they were aware of. In addition, the librarians mentioned several cases of parents objecting to their children reading a particular book portraying violence. Such objections often resulted in removing books from public display in a library. It seems that teachers' role in gatekeeping is bigger in Australia, and parental authority, although present in Australia, might be higher in Ukraine. The data indicates that the librarians are equally powerful in both contexts, even though their roles differ slightly.

In both cultures, teachers and librarians are perceived as experienced gatekeepers who have the right to decide on the appropriateness of a picturebook for a certain age. In Ukraine, many librarians interviewed for the study believed those decisions must be reviewed by psychologists and counsellors; whereas in Australia, the research participants often said that a collegial decision can be made simply by involving more teachers or librarians in the decision-making process. Only a few participants said they regularly consult the written policy for library collection development. They claimed that such policy is an ongoing project requiring continuous revisions and improvements.

6.1.2. Finding 2: Three Dimensions of the Decision-making Process in Selecting Books

Selection of appropriate and useful readings for children is a complex and multi-dimensional decision-making process. It has at least three dimensions: child-centred, book-centred and contextual. All these dimensions complement each other; usually a decision about book appropriateness involves all three dimensions as the gatekeepers take into account their readers, the book and the context (See Figure 2). Furthermore, each dimension contains different aspects. This study examines various manifestations of each dimension and its aspects across Ukrainian and Australian cultures.

The child-centred dimension is manifested through considering the needs and preferences of an individual reader when selecting and recommending books for young readers. The choice of picturebook is expected to be suitable for a particular reader or a group of readers with regards to their unique level of maturity and sensitivity. When deciding on the age-appropriateness of picturebooks, the participants in both countries were concerned with children's emotional wellbeing, as well as with their mental, emotional and moral development. In addition, the gatekeepers assess potential risks and benefits of each book for their readers.

The book-centred dimension is concerned with judging text and illustrations. The ways in which violence is represented impacts the decisions about the appropriateness of picturebooks for young readers. Picturebooks with dark and *mature* illustrations are often not recommended for children younger than 7 by the majority of gatekeepers. The level of fictionality is important too. Fantasy genres, settings and characters are perceived as safer and less frightening than realistic picturebooks representing violence. In addition, the amount, intensity and purpose of the violence are considered. For example, the acts of violence aimed at protecting one's life, one's family or one's country are perceived as justifiable. By contrast, violence can be seen as gratuitous if it does not play any important role in a story.

The contextual dimension includes all the contexts surrounding the child and the book that influence the decision-making process. First, the gatekeepers consider if the story, settings and the main characters in a picturebook are familiar and relatable to a child; and if the harmed, injured and killed characters are someone the child would not associate with (a dragon, a wolf, or an old wizard). Additionally, the teachers and librarians may consult

trustworthy sources to learn about the book, they consider the reputation of the author and the illustrator in the media (e.g., book reviews, book awards) and they make sure their decisions are aligned with school policies and school curriculum. Finally, culture influences the ways in which violence is perceived. Violence may be invisible if a story is deeply rooted in culture; but it can also be horrifying if a story contains culturally specific taboo topics.

To present my findings, I created a set of questions encompassing the three dimensions of the decision-making process. Table 3 represents what types of thoughts, feelings, and doubts the interviewed gatekeepers of CL might have when selecting picturebooks for children. The table demonstrates the complexity of the decision-making process and shows how all three dimensions of the process work together. Potentially, these questions can be used by teachers, librarians and parents when evaluating picturebooks representing violence.

Table 3

The Questions for Judging a Picturebook Representing Violence

	child-centred dimension (reader)	book-centred dimension (text)	contextual dimension (context)
picturebook	Can the words or pictures upset and distress young readers?	Are the words or pictures scary, unpleasant or disgusting?	What do the book reviews say about the illustrations and the text of the picturebook?
illustrations	Are the pictures colourful enough for young children? Is the	How do the illustrations look? Are they pleasant to look at?	What is the reputation of the book illustrator? How do

	drawing style accessible?		their previous works look?
visual representations of violence	Will children perceive the depicted scene as violent?	Do the illustrations explicitly depict the act of violence?	Have there been complaints about the book illustrations?
character	Will children be able to connect to the story and to the main characters?	Who are the characters? Are the characters fictional (e.g., monsters, witches)? What is the age of the characters?	Are the characters part of a national mythology and cultural heritage (e.g., ANZACs in Ukraine and Cossacks in Ukraine)?
story	Will children be able to comprehend abstract ideas communicated by words?	What are the themes explored in the story? What are the settings? How does the story end?	Has this text been traditionally read to children? Is this text part of the curriculum? Does the book convey significant cultural values?
the use of words	Is the choice of words suitable for the child's levels of maturity and sensitivity?	Is the story 'softened' by humour, implicit descriptions, rhythm and rhyme?	Who is reading the text to the reader? What intonation do they use?

levels of fictionality	Do children understand this is fiction? Are children able to separate the story from their personal experiences?	Is it a fantasy or a realistic text? Is it a historical fiction? What is the style of drawing (e.g., realistic, abstract)?	Does the book represent significant historical events? Is the story a part of folklore? Do children know the story from elsewhere (e.g., history lessons, cartoons)?
violence	Has the child been exposed to violence (e.g., domestic violence, war violence)? Is the child mature enough to talk about violence? Is the child sensitive about certain topics (e.g., cruelty against animals)?	Are the descriptions and depictions of violence implicit or explicit? Is the violence the main theme or a minor episode? What role does violence play in the story? Can the story exist without the violent scene? Is the presence of violence necessary to convey the moral?	Is the violence condemned? Is the violence glorified? Is this a case of self-defence? Is violence in the story related to the important contemporary issues? Can the scene of violence be used in education to teach children empathy and kindness?

6.1.3. Finding 3: Four Categories of Child-Readers: Naïve, Scared, Troubled and Accomplished

Children's emotional response to the book, children's level of maturity and children's individual sensitivity are among the primary concerns of the gatekeepers of CL. Often, the teachers and librarians want to protect a child reader from unpleasant emotions – fear, anxiety or sadness – and they try to anticipate the child's reaction to the book, acting as

guardians. Also, they are concerned that young children might not understand the nuances and complexities of situations represented in the picturebooks with violence, and that the book might cause nightmares. At the same time, the participants of this study agreed that not all children are the same: some children are more sensitive than others; therefore, an individual approach to each child reader is required.

The responses of the interviewed teachers and librarians served as the basis for constructing categories of ideal child readers applied in the book selection process. These categories are: naive reader, scared reader, troubled reader and accomplished reader (See Figure 8). The immature readers are usually younger than 7; they can be seen as scared readers if they are rather sensitive, or as naïve readers if their sensitivity level is low. Young readers in the process of maturation between 7 and 12 can be perceived as naïve, scared, troubled or accomplished depending on an individual child's development and experience. Mature readers, usually older than 12, can be seen as either troubled or accomplished. If they are sensitive about topics related to violence, they are perceived as troubled; if they can cope with negative emotions evoked by the scenes of violence in picturebooks, they are perceived as accomplished readers of controversial picturebooks. These categories are representations of *ideal* readers. Real children would shift from one category to another as they grow and gain experience in reading fiction. Furthermore, the same child may belong to more than one category depending on a book. Therefore, to only consider the child is not enough: it is also necessary to judge the book.

6.1.4. Finding 4: Levels of Fictionality in Picturebooks

Visual and verbal representations of violence are evaluated by the gatekeepers of CL in the process of book selection (See Figure 10). Certain visual representations are perceived as *mature* illustrations: they are considered to be dark, overly realistic and unpleasant. If those features are combined with an explicit portrayal of violence, an illustration was considered inappropriate for children younger than 12 according to some participants and for children younger than 8 according to others. Verbal representations of violence perceived as inappropriate included explicit descriptions of violence, gratuitous violence and taboo topics such as cruelty against animals, killing humans, suicide, cannibalism and others.

Levels of fictionality in words and pictures influenced the interpretations of violence in picturebooks by the gatekeepers of CL too. Parents, teachers and librarians pay attention to characters, settings, genre and style of drawing. They are concerned with who the characters are, what the settings look like, and whether the text belongs to a realistic, fantastic or historical genre. If the story is set up in an imaginary world, the children-protagonists survive and the violence is directed at villains, then the violence seem to be *righteous*. Many tales fall into this category. If the settings, characters and events refer to the historical past and portray significant historical moments involving violence (e.g., a famous battle), the representation of violence are considered to be justified. Often picturebooks about the First and the Second World War represent this type of violence; many gatekeepers regard such stories to be palatable. However, if the settings are realistic and relatable, the child-protagonist is harmed or killed, or the purpose of violence is not clear, the picturebook is generally said to be highly inappropriate for children. There are almost no picturebooks like this, however.

The style of drawing is also considered. The more abstract and less detailed styles are preferred by the Ukrainian participants if the book represents violence. Negative facial expressions or characters who turn their back on the reader in the illustration are seen as sinister and too frightening for young children by the Australian gatekeepers. Also, if the illustrations were perceived as beautiful, they were judged as more appropriate in comparison to ugly illustrations in both countries, even though the ideas of what constitutes beautiful differed.

Finally, the gatekeepers cared about the amount, intensity and purpose of violence in the text. Based on the beliefs about the appropriateness of the picturebook to certain ages and the levels of fictionality in the studied picturebooks, violence in picturebooks can be perceived as invisible, tamed, safe, palatable, justified, or gratuitous. Violence may appear to be invisible if the story has been deeply rooted in culture. However, it may be perceived as horrifying if it evokes memory of traumatic historical events.

6.1.5. Finding 5: The Preferred Modes of Reading Controversial Picturebooks

The decisions on appropriateness of picturebooks for children are influenced by the selected modes of reading too, as the book can be read aloud with parents at home, read

silently as a solitary reading experience in the library, or discussed with a teacher at school. The preference for a certain mode of reading appears to be correlated with the cultural background of the decision-maker and, accordingly, with the perception of the gatekeeper's role discussed in Section 6.1.1. The Australian participants believed that almost any picturebook representing violence can be discussed in a classroom because skilful teachers can create an empathetic and supportive environment, and offer children suitable interpretations of the story. The Australian teachers described situations where they warned students about the uncomfortable theme they were going to discuss in advance. This would give children a chance to choose if they want to be present at discussion and if so to mentally prepare for it. By contrast, the Ukrainian participants seemed to prefer family reading and one-to-one conversations over group discussions. They said this mode of reading has plenty of benefits: it strengthens the emotional connection between a child and parents; parents know their child well enough to know how to tailor the story for their child's level of sensitivity; and the child benefits from asking questions and discussing the controversial topic during one-to-one conversation with parents. One possible explanation of this difference is that the gatekeepers often try to mitigate any potential risks associated with reading frightening or upsetting stories representing violence. In Ukraine, parents are perceived as the primary guardians of child readers who can use intonation and explanations to ensure children feel safe. In Australia, teachers are perceived as able to be the guardians of child readers.

6.1.6. Finding 6: Curating Picturebooks

Depending on how violence is perceived, teachers and librarians employ different strategies for *curating* picturebooks representing violence. These include hiding books, silencing books by never recommending them, tagging some books as *senior picturebooks*, supervising children when they choose picturebooks and discussing the picturebooks with children. There are subtle differences in Australian and Ukrainian book curation (See Figures 11 and 12). The Australian gatekeepers are likely to use limited access shelves for controversial picturebooks. Books that contain realistic settings and characters, naturalistic illustrations, and gratuitous violence have a high chance of being among those controversial books. Such books are not recommended to children; however, they are used in education to discuss

complex and nuanced issues during a class discussion. Participants claimed these picturebooks are useful for raising children's awareness about history, contemporary issues and other important issues.

In Ukraine, parents often actively participate in the book curation process: librarians recommend books to parents as well as to children, and parents often read books to children and with children. The inappropriate representations of violence in picturebooks include explicit representations linked to taboo topics, violence which results in the death of the main character and some realistic stories situated in the 20th century context. Ways to curate books in Ukraine include having one-to-one conversations with a child about a picturebook, explaining the theme to a child and interpreting the book together, and being guided by a child's personality traits when deciding if a child will enjoy scary stories. Some Ukrainian participants said that if child readers are very young, parents should use soft and gentle intonation to soften any disturbing descriptions. Once child readers reach school age, the Ukrainian participants believed, they should know the truth about real world, and they should develop their emotional intelligence skills and empathy by reading controversial picturebooks.

6.1.7. Summary: Interpreting Violence in Picturebooks

Overall, there are many ways to access the risks and benefits of a picturebook representing violence. To decide if a book is appropriate for young children, the participants of this study relied on their observations of individual readers, their own professional experience of working with readers, their personal beliefs about violence in CL, children and childhood; they would take into account the book reviews, book awards and library collection development policies and they would use the support of their colleagues when making a decision on the appropriateness of a picturebook. In addition, culture influences the process of decision-making as teachers, librarian and parents have slightly different roles and choose different modes of reading in the two discussed cultures. Consequently, several strategies for curating picturebooks are employed in Australia and Ukraine. These strategies include supervising child's access to books, tagging picturebooks as senior, explaining the meaning of the story to children during one-to-one conversations and group discussions.

6.2. Contribution to Children's Literature Research

The contribution of this thesis to CL research manifests in a deeper understanding of how CL gatekeepers perceive the portrayal of violence in picturebooks, and how gatekeepers curate controversial picturebooks in Australia and Ukraine at the beginning of the 21st century. The study confirms that many adults in these countries expect CL to be innocent and violence free. Child readers are often believed to be in need of protection from *harmful* topics, especially in Australia. Picturebooks with dark, realistic illustrations representing negative facial expressions are perceived as not suitable for very young children. Realistic books representing violence are perceived as more upsetting than fantasy books. These beliefs and practices establish a basis for further explorations in the fields of CL and education.

Beyond that, the research on controversial and challenging CL is enriched by this study. Because the study aims at theorizing the ways in which fictional violence is perceived, it contributes new insights that go beyond those generated by existing studies on controversial picturebooks. It reveals that depending on the genre, setting and characters, which shape levels of fictionality, violence may be perceived as safe or tame; depending on the purpose of violence it can be seen as justified or gratuitous; and depending on the cultural background of a gatekeeper, it may be invisible. The findings of the study demonstrate that certain cases of violence in picturebooks are perceived as palatable by gatekeepers. For example, if a victim happens to be a dragon, a wolf or a dingo, violence against them is not seen as frightening. In some cases, fictional violence may be acceptable under a number of conditions, whereas other violence is perceived as inappropriate until a child reaches teenage age. For example, if the events take place in an imaginary world and the story finishes with a happy ending, violence is more likely to be overlooked. However, if settings and characters are realistic; the harmed characters are children or little animals, or the purpose of violence is unclear, the story is likely to be seen as unsuitable for children. As a result, picturebooks representing realistic settings and characters, featuring some taboo topics and mature illustrations are seen as inappropriate. These books are hidden and silenced.

Furthermore, the study broadens the existing understanding of fictional violence across cultures. In Australia, the gatekeepers believe that fairy tales featuring violence can

be read by children who are older that 9 or 10. In Ukraine, traditional fairy tales enjoy the privilege of being read to young children even if they are frightening, violent or upsetting, because of their high level of fictionality and symbolism, and because they are part of a culture passed on from generation to generation. In Australia, picturebooks about war are regarded as acceptable if violence is not glorified; whereas in Ukraine, there are conflicting views on whether children should read picturebooks representing war. The majority of Ukrainian participants explained that representations of war should not be explicit and that not all adults are ready to work with those books. It is believed that the danger of upsetting children associated with fictional violence can be mitigated during classroom discussions in Australia and during one-to-one conversations with parents in Ukraine. Through these findings, the study maps the landscape of appropriateness in CL.

Consequently, the study responds to the increasing interest in the roles of violence may play in CL and fosters greater awareness about the ways in which controversial books are selected for children and used with children in two socio-cultural contexts. Overall, this study makes an original contribution to contemporary research on picturebooks and guardianship in CL. Furthermore, the theoretical contribution can be useful for scholars in educational research.

6.3. Implications for Professional Practice in Education

The study is beneficial for the participants of this study and for the broader educational community. It can help to raise gatekeepers' awareness of the factors at play when they make decisions about the selection of picturebooks and their use in the education of particular children. Furthermore, the findings can be useful for Australian and Ukrainian teachers, librarians, and parents in several ways.

The findings of this study can inform librarians' decisions as they review their collection development policies. One of the challenges of assessing fictional violence is that it is often hardly noticeable. This research sheds light on the problem and shows that librarians can become more aware of the fact that fictional violence is present in picturebooks, and that there is a place for books representing violence in the library. To increase the awareness of how to curate controversial picturebooks, library collection

development policies should explain why CL representing violence should be present in library collections, and how to select books representing bullying, fighting, domestic violence, war, and other types of violence which would best suit the age of readership. Also, it is suggested that library collection development policies inform their users that librarians often act as gatekeepers of CL, while gatekeepers should be aware of their power and responsibilities. Library collection development policies should also explicitly encourage librarians to avoid self-censorship (e.g., hiding books from child-readers), to actively invite children to participate in the book selection process by creating wish lists, and simply to communicate with readers. Australian librarians can apply the insights obtained through this research in their practice by updating their library collection development policies, and by considering ways in which they can discuss child-readers' book preferences on a regular basis. Ukrainian librarians, who already regularly discuss readers' choices and preferences with children, can take into consideration the findings of this research when updating and improving their library collection development policies.

This study has implications not only for librarians. Knowledge generated through this research can be useful for teachers too. By becoming more aware of how and why picturebooks are selected, teachers will be in a position to make more informed choices when deciding which books to read and discuss in the classroom. Educators can use Table 3 presented in this study as a guide for selecting picturebooks. The findings of this study might increase teachers' awareness of which books they tend to avoid, how they perceive readers of controversial picturebooks, how they can include children more into the decision-making process, and how they might create empathetic environments for their students.

Policy makers can use the findings for reviewing the school curriculum and the texts recommended for school reading. In Australia, school policies could inform teachers about the risk of self-censorship and its negative consequences. In Ukraine, a possible change, which could be implemented by the Ministry of Education, would be to increase the agency of teachers and students in choosing books. As mentioned previously, in many Ukrainian schools, teachers have to follow the national curriculum and to work with compulsory reading lists. It would be better if Ukrainian teachers had the power to choose which books to read because, if this were the case, they could discuss book suggestions with children (as Ukrainian librarians do) and choose books relevant to the local child readers.

The findings concerned with gatekeeping in CL can be of interest to parents, too. After learning about the main results of this study from my future web-publications, parents might consider their roles in gatekeeping: how they select, evaluate, and read with children. Also, parents might become more conscious of the potential benefits of family reading.

Lastly, the authors of picturebooks and CL may benefit from this study too. By understanding the expectations of teachers, librarians and parents toward picturebooks aimed at certain ages, they might be better informed about the desired choices or about ways for finding a compromise. As the study shows, some authors dare to challenge common beliefs about representing violence in picturebooks; however, they still follow certain rules within certain cultural context.

Furthermore, the findings of this research might attract the interest of librarians, teachers, policy-makers, parents, and authors from other countries. They may be encouraged to examine their beliefs and practices, and to compare and contrast their experience of book selection with that of their international colleagues. The knowledge generated in this study is transferable and applicable in new research contexts. First, the study suggests that formal strategies of book selection can be improved. Sections on why and how to select picturebooks representing violence should be added to library collection development policies, as well as definitions of fictional violence and self-censorship and descriptions of risks associated with self-censorship. Second, dissemination of the research findings may lead to a better understanding of gatekeeping and guardianship in CL among librarians, teachers, and parents: they can make more informed choices when selecting and curating controversial books in different cultural contexts. Third, the study encourages stakeholders from both countries to acknowledge the models of child readers which adults often construct when selecting books, and to consider if these ideal abstract constructs actually match real child readers. Consequently, the results of the cross-cultural comparison described in this thesis can be expanded beyond Australia and Ukraine, and be beneficial for stakeholders from other socio-cultural contexts.

6.4. Limitations of the Study

This study is an exploration of contemporary views and beliefs about the representations of violence in picturebooks held by stakeholders involved in children's education and upbringing. Although the study aims are ambitious and versatile, this research project has faced a number of limitations. The limitations include a modest scope of the study and a narrow focus on picturebooks. Also, the number of research methods was limited to two.

To start with, the scale of the research is comparatively small. This study falls under qualitative research, and consequently it included 30 participants. Also, the study focuses on gatekeepers' perceptions only. This means that adults (not children) were participants of this study. Furthermore, the Australian participants were mostly from Tasmania; to the best of my knowledge, no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Peoples participated in this study. The Ukrainian participants were from the West, the East and the central regions of Ukraine. This means that the findings of this study are indicative of views and attitudes present in a sample of the groups under consideration. They do not establish the degree to which these views and attitudes are representative.

In addition, the focus on this study was mostly on picturebooks. Although the discussed examples also included illustrated collections of tales and some participants used novels and other genres to illustrate their ideas about fictional violence, the main subject of study was violence in picturebooks. In addition, picturebooks representing Aboriginal myths and legends were not discussed in this thesis – such a topic deserves a separate study. Further research can address these limitations.

6.5. Directions for Future Research

This study has answered five research questions and created a dozen new queries. Findings presented in this study have derived from the interviews with Australian and Ukrainian teachers and librarians, and represent their points of view. Further research may choose to continue exploring the use of picturebooks representing violence in the classroom, in the library and at home. One direction to follow is to conduct similar interviews across cultures other than Australia and Ukraine. Another direction is to work with the Australian and Ukrainian gatekeepers, but to move a step further. First, as mentioned above, the majority of Australian participants were from Tasmania and not all regions of Ukraine were

represented in this study. Further research would be necessary to compare data collected from different Australian states, to look at Aboriginal perceptions of violence in different narratives, or to see the perceptions of Ukrainian gatekeepers in different Ukrainian regions. It is also possible to examine whether the results would be the same with a larger number of participants. Second, subsequent studies on the topic could test the suggested theory using such research methods as observation, interviews and written accounts in the form of teacher's diary. The focus of such studies could be on how gatekeepers perceive themselves in the decision-making process and what roles picturebooks representing violence play in education.

In addition, follow-up research could explore the perspective of young readers. Guided by insights reached in this thesis into how teachers and librarians feel about discussing controversial picturebooks with children, it would be valuable to learn what children think about picturebooks representing violence. Also, child agency in the process could be studied. The research methods for such study might include observations, video-recording, and interviewing students.

Finally, one of the limitations was that the study was mostly focused on a single type of CL, the picturebook. Further research could address this limitation by exploring other genres in detail, for example, studying violence in teenage novels. Also, scholars might consider looking at a larger number of picturebooks and illustrated books to see if the findings of this study are generalisable.

Overall, the current study builds a foundation for further research by demonstrating the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the book selection process. Although this study explores gatekeepers' perspectives on the representation of violence in picturebooks only, it plants the seed for larger scale research which may include a bigger number of participants, more cultures, child participants, other types of CL and data research methods. Furthermore, the study raises an awareness of how the gatekeepers of CL perceive violence in CL and may lead to research on why and how educators use these picturebooks in their classrooms.

6.6. In Conclusion

This study has aimed at exploring the interpretations of violence in CL by the gatekeepers of CL. The research questions have investigated how the gatekeepers in educational settings perceive verbal and visual representations of violence and their potential impact on young readers. The proliferation of academic literature on related topics suggests that the exploration of these research questions is relevant and timely.

The study belongs to qualitative research. It is underpinned by the social constructionist paradigm; it is informed by grounded theory. As a result, theoretical sampling to recruit participants was employed. The methods used to collect and analyse data are Responsive Interviewing Method and Thematic Analysis. These methods complement one another and are aligned with the social constructionist paradigm. Also, the study employed visual methodology because picturebooks and illustrated collections of tales were used to assist in conducting interviews.

The findings of the study show that the main gatekeepers of CL in educational settings are teachers, librarians and parents. To select age-appropriate picturebooks representing violence, gatekeepers follow a complex decision-making process which consists of three dimensions: child-centred, book-centred and contextual. In addition, they construct four categories of ideal child readers based on children's levels of maturity and sensitivity; these are: naïve, scared, troubled and accomplished readers. Furthermore, verbal and visual representations of violence in picturebooks are considered. First, genre, character and setting play a role. Second, the amount, intensity and purpose of fictional violence are taken into account. Finally, context influences gatekeepers' perceptions of violence in picturebooks. Such contexts include personal, media and cultural contexts surrounding a picturebook and its reader. The strategies for curating picturebooks representing violence include supervised access to picturebooks, tagged picturebooks and discussions of controversial picturebooks with children. The study offers a glimpse into a landscape of gatekeepers' beliefs about child readers, various types of fictional violence, and about the roles of adults in curating children's books as well as supervising young readers.

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Лущевська, О., Найдан, М. & Старанчук, О. (2015). *Листи на війну*. Братське [Lushchevska, O., Naydan, M., & Staranchuk, O. (2015). *Letters on the war.* Bratske].

Малкович, І. (Ред.) (2017 [2013]). *100 Казок: найкращі українські народні казки з ілюстраціями провідних українських художників*. 1-3-ій том. А-БА-БА-ГА-ЛА-МА-ГА [Malkovych, I. (Ed.) (2017 [2013]) [*The best Ukrainian folktales illustrsated by recognised artists*. 1-3 volumes. A- BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA].

Павлишин, Г. (2006). *Унікальна картоплина. Грані-Т* [Pavlyshyn, H. (2006). *Unique potato.* Grani-T].

Рис, Г. (2014). *Намалюй мене пташкою* [Rys, H. (2014). *Draw me as though I was a bird.* Discursus].

Рис, Г. (2014). *Подорож до Котанії.* Арт-Арea *[*Rys, H. (2014). *Journey to Catland.* Art-Area].

Рис, Г. (2016). *Амстердам-Київ. І трохи святого Миколая*. Дискурсус [Rys, H. (2016). *Amsterdam-Kyiv. And a little bit about St Nicolas.* Discursus].

Романишин, Р., & Лесів, А. (2015). *Війна, що змінила Рондо*. ВСЛ [Romanyshyn, R., & Lesiv, A. (2015). *The war which changed Rondo*. VLS].

Тимошенко, М., & Горішний, К. (2014). *Герой поневолі*. Леополь [Tymoshenko, M. & Horishny, K. (2014). *Hero unwillingly*. Leopol].

Шевченко, Т., & Михайлошина, М. (2016). *Дитячий Кобзар*. ВСЛ [Shevchenko, T., & Mykhayloshyna, M. (2016). *Kobzar for children*. VLS].

Appendices

Appendix 1. Questions for Semi-structures Interviews in English

1. Thank you for finding time for this interview! Could you please tell me about your experiences with picturebooks as a librarian? What are your responsibilities? How often do you need to choose books for the library collection? Are you expected to recommend books to schoolchildren?
2. Let us move to the controversial topics in picturebooks. Do you remember any picturebooks which surprised you with challenging or controversial content? What was the most surprising in those picturebooks?
3. Do you remember any cases when parents felt unhappy with the newly released picturebook aimed at children? Why? What was the reason for their concern?
4. Moving on, we are going to discuss a few examples of picturebooks representing violence. First of all, could you please tell me how you would define violence?
5. Could you name a few contemporary picturebooks which represent violence?
6. What is your opinion about presence of violence in children's literature?
7. Have you ever read a picturebook which represents a violent scene or event to children? What was their reaction?
8. Now, I will show you a few examples of both Ukrainian and Australian picturebooks representing violence (e.g., war, fights, suicide). Then, I will briefly explain what the story is about. After this I would like to hear your thoughts about each example:

- ✓ What do you think about the images? What messages would they communicate?
- ✓ What is your interpretation of this scene? What age of children this picturebook can aim at? Would it be more appropriate to read such a book with parents at home or to discuss it in the classroom with a teacher? Why?
- ✓ Would you recommend young readers to read this book? Why? Why not?

Appendix 2. Questions for Semi-structures Interviews in Ukrainian

1. Дякую, що погодилися на цю розмову. Будь ласка, розкажіть про себе. Звідки Ви родом? Хто Ви за освітою? Будь ласка, коротко опишіть свою теперішню роботу.
2. Чи часто доводиться працювати з дітьми та рекомендувати їм книги? Та чи доводиться Вам читати ілюстровані книги разом з дітьми? Як часто обговорюєте ілюстровані книги з юними читачами?
3. Як би визначили насильство? Що входить до цієї категорії?
4. Чи вважаєте “війну” та “самогубство” різновидами насильства? Чи відносите лайливі слова до різновидів насильства?
5. Чи зустрічалися Вам книги для дітей, в яких були б описані сцени насильства?
6. Чи зустрічалися Вам ілюстрації, в яких було б зображено насильство?
7. Чи могли б Ви назвати кілька книг, написаних сучасними авторами або проілюстрованих сучасними художниками-ілюстраторами, які б зображували насильство?
8. Яка Ваша думка щодо зображення насильства в книгах для дітей?
9. Чи до Ваших службових обов’язків входить відбір книг? Якими критеріями користуєтеся? Чи присутність/відсутність насильства входить до цих критеріїв?
10. Чи вам коли-небудь доводилося читати дітям книгу, в якій було б зображене насильство (наприклад, війна)? Якщо так, будь ласка, розкажіть про це детальніше. Якою була реакція дітей? Якою була Ваша реакція?
11. Будь ласка, прокоментуйте ці австралійські та українські ілюстровані книги [показую зразки малюнків]. Як Ви вважаєте, для кого створені ці книга? Якщо для дітей, то якого віку?
12. На Вашу думку, такі книги краще читати самостійно чи з батьками? Чи варто вивчати ці книги у школі? Якщо так то в якому віці й чому?
13. [Показую короткий зразок тексту]. Що Ви думаєте про цей уривок?

Appendix 3. Profiles of Research Participants

001U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 40+ years of work experience

Educational background: BEd, MA (*Librarianship*)

Responsibilities: Head of a children's literature library in Lviv

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Lviv (Western Ukraine)

Gender: Female

002U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 20+ years of work experience, and musician

Educational background: BA, MA (*Music*)

Responsibilities: Manages art section of the library; conducts weekly workshops for children

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Lviv (Western Ukraine)

Gender: Female

003U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 15+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Philology*), MA (*Law*)

Responsibilities: Works in the central library for youth in Lviv; recommend books for children

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Lviv (Western Ukraine)

Gender: Female

004U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 15+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Philology*)

Responsibilities: Works in the central library for youth in Lviv; conducts weekly workshops for children (including discussions about picturebooks representing war)

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Lviv (Western Ukraine)

Gender: Female

005U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 20+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Philology*)

Responsibilities: Head of the central library for youth in Lviv. In charge of selecting new books to be bought and planning 5-7 events per week

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Lviv (Western Ukraine)

Gender: Female

006U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 20+ years of work experience

Educational background: BEd, MEd (*Education*)

Responsibilities: Works in children's library. Recommend books for children

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Lviv (Western Ukraine)

Gender: Female

007U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 13+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Librarianship*)

Responsibilities: Works in the central library for youth in Kyiv. Conducts weekly workshops for children (including discussions about picturebooks representing war)

Place of origin: Armenia

Place of residence: Kyiv (Capital, Central Ukraine)

Gender: Female

008U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 10+ years of work experience, and creative writer

Educational background: BA, MA (*Philology*)

Responsibilities: Works in a library for children and youth in Kyiv. Recommend books for children on the everyday basis, and discusses books with children

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Kyiv (Capital, Central Ukraine)

Gender: Female

009U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 30+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Librarianship*)

Responsibilities: Works in the biggest National children library of Ukraine. Makes selection of the books for all the children's libraries in Ukraine (1000 + libraries)

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Kyiv (Capital, Central Ukraine)

Gender: Female

010U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 30+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Librarianship*)

Responsibilities: Head of the children's literature library in Lviv. Organises 1-2 workshops every week. Makes selections of the books to be bought. Recommend books for children

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Lviv (Western Ukraine)

Gender: Female

011U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 20+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Librarianship*)

Responsibilities: Works at the school library of a secondary school, recommending books for children on the everyday basis, and organising book-related events

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Lviv (Western Ukraine)

Gender: Female

012U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 20+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Librarianship*)

Responsibilities: Head of the University library, selecting books to purchase for the library, and books to read for his daughters

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Ostrog (Central Ukraine)

Gender: Male

013U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Teacher with 10+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Philology*)

Responsibilities: Teaches Ukrainian Literature at a secondary school (grades 5-11), recommending books for children on the everyday basis

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Ostrog (Central Ukraine)

Gender: Female

014U

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 40+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Librarianship*)

Responsibilities: Works at a school library, recommending books for children

Place of origin: Ukraine (was deported to Syberia as a child)

Place of residence: Ostrog (Central Ukraine)

Gender: Female

015U

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 20+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Librarianship*)

Responsibilities: Works at a city children's literature library, recommend books for children

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Ostrog (Central Ukraine)

Gender: Female

016U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Teacher with 40+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Philology*)

Responsibilities: Teaches Ukrainian Literature at a secondary school (grades 8-11)

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Lviv (Western Ukraine)

Gender: Male

017U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 30+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Librarianship*)

Responsibilities: Works at a city children's literature library, recommending books for children on the everyday basis

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Zaporizhia (Eastern Ukraine)

Gender: Female

018U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Librarian with 20+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Philology*)

Responsibilities: Works at a city children's literature library, recommending books for children on the everyday basis

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Zaporizhia (Eastern Ukraine)

Gender: Female

019U:

Citizenship: Ukrainian

Occupation: Teacher with 5+ years of work experience, and creative writer

Educational background: BA, MA (*Philology*)

Responsibilities: Teaches Ukrainian Literature at private primary school (grades 1-6), recommending books for children on the everyday basis; writes creative fiction and educational books for children; conducts storytelling workshops with children

Place of origin: Ukraine

Place of residence: Kyiv (Capital, Central Ukraine)

Gender: Female

020A:

Citizenship: Australian

Occupation: Librarian with 30+ years of work experience

Educational background: BEd, MA (*Children's Literature)*, PhD (*Education)*

Responsibilities: Teaches children's literature at University; uses picturebooks at work. Member of the Australian Children's Books Council

Place of origin: Australia

Place of residence: Tasmania, Australia

Gender: Female

022A:

Citizenship: Australian

Occupation: Teacher and teacher-librarian 30+ years of work experience.

Educational background: BA, Med (*Education*)

Responsibilities: Taught English in Australian International School, using picturebooks with secondary school students; was a bookstore owner for many years

Place of origin: Australia

Place of residence: Tasmania, Australia

Gender: Male

023A:

Citizenship: Australian

Occupation: Librarian with 30+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Librarianship*)

Responsibilities: Had a lot of experience of using picturebooks at work

Place of origin: Australia

Place of residence: Tasmania, Australia

Gender: Female

024A:

Citizenship: Australian

Occupation: Librarian with 15+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, BEd, GradDip (*Librarianship*), GradCert (*Education*)

Responsibilities: In charge of library for secondary school, and library collections development. Works in a library of one of the secondary schools

Place of origin: Australia

Place of residence: Tasmania, Australia

Gender: Male

025A:

Citizenship: Australian

Occupation: Teacher and principle with 50+ years of work experience

Educational background: BEd (*Education*)

Responsibilities: Works in primary school, often uses picturebooks

Place of origin: Australia

Place of residence: Tasmania, Australia

Gender: Female

026A:

Citizenship: Australian

Occupation: Librarian with 15+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, MA (*Librarianship*)

Responsibilities: Works at the University library; manages library collection for pre-service teachers, including picturebooks

Place of origin: the USA

Place of residence: Melbourne, Australia

Gender: Female

027A:

Citizenship: Australian

Occupation: Teacher with 27 years of work experience

Educational background: BA (*English*), GradDip (*Education*)

Responsibilities: Worked in independent schools, taught English from the year 7 till 12 Occasionally used picturebooks if they could be used alongside novels

Place of origin: Australia

Place of residence: Tasmania, Australia

Gender: Female

028A:

Citizenship: Australian

Occupation: Librarian with 5+ years of work experience;

Educational background: BEd, MEd (*Education and Librarianship*)

Responsibilities: Works in independent and catholic schools. Recommends books for children on the everyday basis; discusses picturebooks with children

Place of origin: Australia

Place of residence: Tasmania, Australia

Gender: Female

029A:

Citizenship: Australian

Occupation: Teacher with 15+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA (*English*), GradDip (*Education*)

Responsibilities: Worked in primary and secondary schools; taught English, English for children with special needs children, and English as a second language in Hong Kong

Place of origin: Australia

Place of residence: Tasmania, Australia

Gender: Female

030A:

Citizenship: Australian

Occupation: Librarian with 20+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA, Honours (*English*), GradDip (Education)

Responsibilities: Worked in Scotland, and in independents schools in Tasmania. Taught English, and used picturebooks for discussions

Place of origin: Australia

Place of residence: Tasmania, Australia

Gender: Female

031U:

Citizenship: Australian

Occupation: Librarian with 25+ years of work experience

Educational background: BA (*Librarianship*)

Responsibilities: Worked as a library technician in primary school libraries, processing, cataloguing books and sourcing materials for teachers. Recommend books for children

Place of origin: the USA

Place of residence: Tasmania, Australia

Gender: Female

Appendix 4. List of Picturebooks from Australia Used during Interviews

1) And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda

Bogle, E., & Whatley, B. (2015). *And the band played Waltzing Matilda*. Allen & Unwin.

2) Australian Gnomes

Ingpen, R. (1990 [1979]). *Australian Gnomes*. Rigby Lim.

3) Blossom Possum

Newton, G., & Niland, K. (2006). *Blossom Possum: The Sky Is Falling.* Scholastic Australia.

4) Cat on the Island

Crew, G. & Warden, G. (2017 [2008]). *Cat on the island.* Angus & Robertson.

5) My Dog

Heffernan, J., & McLean, A. (2001). *My Dog.* Hunter's Hill.

6) Not Now, Bernard

McKee, D. (2005 [1980]). *Not now, Bernard.* Andersen Press.

7) Ride, Ricardo, Ride!

Cummings, P., & Devries, S. (2015). *Ride, Ricardo, Ride!* Scholastic Australia.

8) The Great Bear

Gleason, L., & Greder, A. (2010). *The Great Bear*. Walker Books Australia.

9) Waltzing Matilda

Paterson, A.B., & Blackwood, F. (2007). *Waltzing Matilda*. Scholastic Australia.

Appendix 5. List of Picturebooks and Illustrated Books from Ukrainian Interviews

***1)* "Horse and Wolf" [Кінь і Вовк]**

Antypova, M. (2015) *Ukrainian fairytales.* Kraina Mriy.

***2)* "Ivasyk-Telesyk" [Івасик-Телесик]**

Malkovych, I. (Ed.) (2017 [2013]) [*The best Ukrainian folktales illustrated by recognised artists*. 1-3 volumes. A- BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA.

***3)* "Kotyhoroshko" [Котигорошко]**

Malkovych, I. (Ed.) (2017 [2013]) [*The best Ukrainian folktales illustrated by recognised artists*. 1-3 volumes. A- BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA.

***4) "*Kyrylo Kozhumiaka" [Kyrylo Kozhumiaka]**

Malkovych, I. (Ed.) (2017 [2013]) [*The best Ukrainian folktales illustrated by recognised artists*. 1-3 volumes. A- BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA.

5) Letters on the War [Листи на війну]

Lushchevska, O., Naydan, M., & Staranchuk, O. (2015). *Letters on the war.* Bratske

6)* "Sirko" *[Сірко]

Antypova, M. (2015) *Ukrainian fairytales.* Kraina Mriy.

7) The War Which Changed Rondo [Війна, що змінила Рондо]

Romanyshyn, R., & Lesiv, A. (2015). *The War Which Changed Rondo*. VLS.

***8) "*Vixen, the Sister" [Лисичка-Сестричка]**

Antypova, M. (2015) *Ukrainian fairytales.* Kraina Mriy.

***9) "*Yaroslavna's Lament" [Плач Ярославни**]

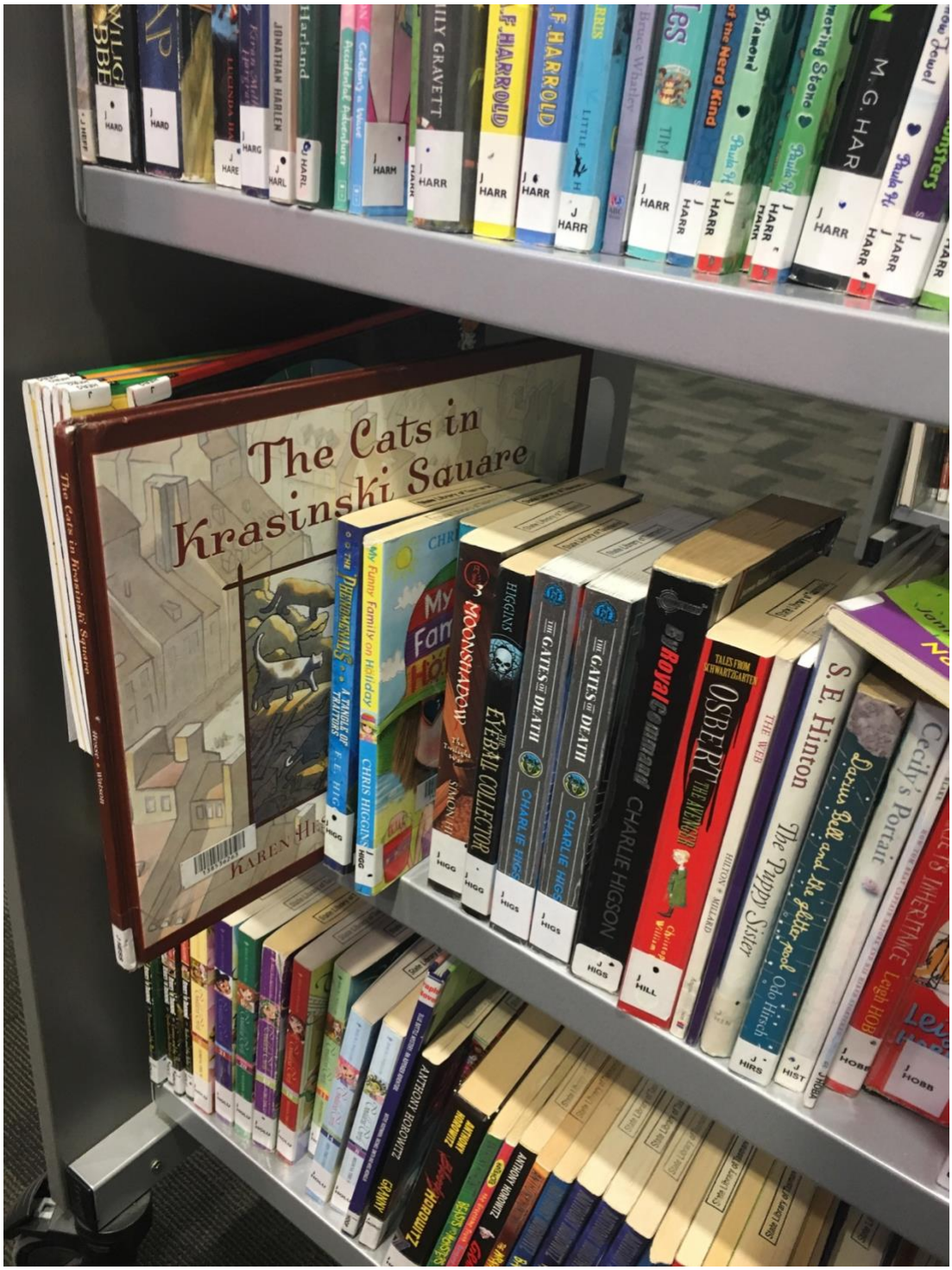
Shevchenko, T., & Mykhayloshyna, M. (2016). *Kobzar for children*. VLS.

a ha been removed for copyright or proprietary reasons.

a appendices 6-23 and are a d n a n 4 and 5 (and listed in the contents pages as well).

Appendix 24. Picturebooks on the Shelves for Older Readers in an Australian Library

From private collection of Halyna Pavlyshyn



Appendix 25. Example of a School Policy from an Australian School Library

Multiple copies of library materials will generally by determined by the 100 students : 1 copy ratio.

Purchase of materials

All material purchased for Library and Information Services will utilise regular library suppliers with whom substantial discounts have been negotiated wherever possible.

Selection of materials

Teaching departments' advice will be augmented, as needs be, by trade catalogues and reviewing sources, subject teaching associations' sources and individual teachers' advice. Students' requests will also be taken into account.

Collection methods

Funds allocated based on zero-based budget considerations; donations and gifts must meet policy parameters; co-operative agreements must extend access potential.

General Selection Criteria

PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS

Criterion	***Questions to consider***
Appropriateness	Is the content appropriate for our learners? Does the content match their developmental level? Reading level? Social development? Learning styles? Cultural background? Will the work be of interest to our learners? Does the content respect the College's ethos?
Scope	What is the purpose of the work? Is the level of details appropriate to our learners? Does it support the College curriculum or interests of the students?
Accuracy	Is the material up-to-date and accurate? Are opinions and biases, where apparent, acknowledged as such? Does the creator of the work identify the sources used to create it? Does the creator of the work cite credible sources, including specialists or subject experts?
Treatment	Is the style of presentation appropriate for the subject matter and does it have appeal to our learners?

5

	Does the creator avoid stereotypes dealing with race, gender, age, region, and socioeconomic level, or deal with stereotypes sensitively? Does the resource reflect the diversity in Australian society?
Arrangement and organisation	Is the information arranged and organised so that students can understand it? Is the resource organised so that students can easily locate information?
Authority	What are the creator's qualifications? How knowledgeable is the creator about the subject? Does the creator cite credible sources, including specialists or subject experts? Has the creator published or produced other materials on this topic?
Comparison with other works	How does this work compare with others in the same genre and format or on the same subject? How might our learners use this work? How might educators use it with students?

SECONDARY CONSIDERATIONS

Physical quality	Do physical elements such as the clarity of images, illustrations, speech, and music, the consistency of navigations icons, and the legibility of typefaces and fonts adequately support the purpose of the work and the learning styles of our learners?
Aesthetic quality	Will the work appeal to the aesthetic tastes of our learners?
Literary merit	How well does the author, illustrator, director or producer deal with literary components such as theme, setting, character and style?
Reputation of creator	Do our learners use other works by this individual and would they find this work interesting and worthwhile?

The main objective of the selection procedure is to provide learners with a appropriate range of educational materials on a variety of levels of difficulty and in a variety of formats with diversity of appeal, allowing for the presentation of different points of view. The selection objective of Library and Information Services at is to provide teachers and students access to a collection of

- Material that has not been used based on circulation and browsing statistics may be withdrawn after five years of inactivity, or moved to low-use storage. Consideration of the potential educational value of this material may determine its retention regardless of apparent low use.
- Print newspapers over three weeks of age will be withdrawn. Earlier issues are subscribed to electronically.

Items in subject areas not currently taught, which may become relevant again are possible candidates for closed access storage.

Complaints

Complaints about resources will be dealt with by the teacher librarian on a case-by-case basis using the selection criteria in this policy as the point of departure in analysing the appropriateness of the resource or its management.

PART B: REFERENCE COLLECTION

Reference collections provide access to ready-reference material such as specialist dictionaries, directories, handbooks, subject-specific guides, etc. Where Reference items are available at an affordable cost electronically and appropriate Licence agreements are available, that is the preferred medium for access.

Where Reference items are only available at an affordable cost in print format, the print edition may be purchased as required.

PART C: SERIAL COLLECTION

Serial collections include newspapers, journals, magazines, in print and electronic formats. Full-text electronic format will be preferred, using bundled subscriptions wherever possible.

The latest two weeks of newspaper issues will be retained in print format; electronic subscriptions to newspapers will provide access to earlier material.

Adopted 1994; last revised 2018

Appendix 26. Representation of Revolution of Dignity in Mass Media

Kuzmenko (2020) [Кузьменко, В. (2020)]

Appendix 27. Information Sheet for Participants of the Study in English

The interpretation of violence represented in Australian and Ukrainian picturebooks by the gatekeepers of children's literature

[The Participant Information Sheet is aimed at gatekeepers of children's literature including: publishers, editors, librarians and teachers of secondary school who work with picturebooks]

Invitation

You are invited to participate in the research study exploring the potential roles played by violence in Australian and Ukrainian picturebooks and express your opinion on representations of violence in words and images of picturebooks.
The research team for this study includes:

- Dr Angela Thomas, (Chief Investigator), Lecturer, Faculty of Education, UTAS
- Prof Michael Corbett, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, UTAS
- Halyna Pavlyshyn, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, UTAS

The research project is conducted in partial fulfilment of Halyna Pavlyshyn's PhD degree under the supervision of Dr Angela Thomas and Prof Michael Corbett.

What is the purpose of this study?

The main aim of the research is to explore the potential roles which violence (or its absence) plays in picturebooks, as well as to see what types of violence prevail in contemporary picturebooks and why. The research is conducted in order to identify violent/non-violent tendencies in Australian and Ukrainian picturebooks published in the last 30 years, to explore the perceptions of gatekeepers of children's literature on fictional violence, and to define the implications. The comparison of books created in these two countries may help to better understand the cultural influence on the current situation in the publishing and disseminating of children's books representing controversial topics.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this research study because you are an expert in children's literature who work with picturebooks on a regular basis. This may mean that you might be involved in the decision making process of which books recommend, approve, disapprove for children's reading and, therefore, you are very likely to act as a gatekeeper of children's literature in your institution, local community, region or country.
The choice of the participants was primarily based on the link between your institution (e.g. publishing house, school, library etc.) and the use of picturebooks by children. Additionally, you have been asked to participate in the research because your colleagues recommended you as a knowledgeable and influential person in the field of children's literature.

The participation in the study is voluntary and anonymous. We value your opinion and your help in conducting the project. At the same time, we care about the information

protection as an obligatory component of an ethical research. Therefore, we are going to ensure that all the information you are offering cannot be identified or used for any other purposes than the described research. If you wish to do so you may withdraw from the research study by writing an e-mail to the student investigator and informing her about your decision at any time. Such a decision would not have any consequences and would not affect your relationships with the University of Tasmania in any way.

What will I be asked to do?

In the research study, you will be asked to answer open ended questions related to the depiction of violence in picturebooks. Additionally, you will be familiarized with a few examples of both Australian and Ukrainian picturebooks representing violence prior to the interview and then asked to comment on them. All the responses are to be audio-recorded. You will have an opportunity to review and correct a transcript and its translation (if the interview is conducted in Ukrainian). The transcript of the recording is to be sent to your e-mail for your approval and adjustments if required. You are kindly asked to make all the necessary adjustments within 2 months after receiving the transcript (and translation).

In case you prefer not to be audio-recorded, the main theses of your argument are to be written down by the student investigator. These theses are to be typed and send to you for your approval and adjustments if required.

The interview would last around half an hour and take place at the premises of your choice (classroom, office, library room, café etc.).

If you would prefer to communicate via e-mail and to provide the researchers with your written responses to all of the questions, this option is also possible. In this case, the PDF documents of 2 discussed books will be sent to you by e-mail. The PDF should be used for the research purposes only and should not be sent to any third parties.

The examples of the questions which are going to be asked during the interview are:

1. What is your opinion about these passages depicting violence?
   [you are provided with a short text passage from the picturebook]
2. What do you think about these images representing violence?
   [you are provided with an image from the picturebook]
3. What would be the age group of the readers to whom this book could be recommend? Why?

Are there any possible benefits from participation in this study?

Your contribution to the research is highly valued and appreciated!

The potential benefits of the study for society are:

- Identifying the types of violence present in contemporary picturebooks
- Understanding of contemporary perceptions of violence in children’s literature

- Better understanding of what roles violence play in picturebooks and how this knowledge can be used by publishing houses, libraries, schools

Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?

There are no potential risks of this research, however in the unlikely event of a minor psychological discomfort triggered by words or images from picturebooks you are most welcome to contact free of charge counselling services, using the following phone numbers:

- Lifeline Crisis Counselling Hotline: 13 11 14 (24/7 free telephone counselling service in Australia)
- "Stavropegion" 15 58 (24/7 free telephone counselling service in Western Ukraine)
- Lifeline Crisis Counselling Hotline: 705 04 69 (24/7 free telephone counselling service in Eastern Ukraine)

In addition, consultancy for Ukrainian citizens from any region is available by e-mail: kyiv@dovira.info

What if I change my mind during or after the study?

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Should you decide not to participate in the research, please send an e-mail to the student investigator providing a short explanation. Your identity will not be revealed at any time. All the quotations will be attributed to the fictional name and will never be traced back to you. However, in case you choose not to give permission for using direct quotes, please, specify this during the interview.

What will happen to the information when this study is over?

All the audio-recordings will be destroyed as soon as the transcripts are corrected and approved by you. All the identifiable information will be codified and stored in the safe space. This way all the data is non-identifiable.

The transcripts with the fictional names in the document titles will be kept on the personal computer of the student investigator until the day of the theses submission. Later on, the data will be stored at the servers of the University of Tasmania for 5 years from the date of the thesis submission. In case, the researcher would like to use the data for any other other research project you will be asked permission to re-use the data.

All the research data will be treated in a confidential manner. There is no chance your identity can be traced through the information you provide the researcher with. Your name, surname and the full title of your institution will not be mentioned in any publications.

How will the results of the study be published?

The research findings will be disseminated by:

- PhD thesis submission (in English);
- Publications in academic journals (in English, and in Ukrainian);
- Publications on the online platforms, e.g. Medium (in English, and in Ukrainian);
- Presentation of the findings at conferences (in English, and in Ukrainian);
- Public discussions of the findings (in Ukrainian).

As mentioned previously, your identity will be disguised and never revealed, unless you state explicitly in the written form that you insist on mentioning of your name/institution.

What if I have questions about this study?

Should you have any questions about the research study please do not hesitate to contact a student investigator or other members of the research team by e-mail:
halyna.pavlyshyn@utas.edu.au
angela.thomas@utas.edu.au
michel.corbett@utas.edu.au

or using the following contact details:

Postal Address: Locked Bag 1307, Launceston,
Tasmania 7250, Australia

Faculty of Education Enquiries (non-student related): 1800 061 512 (within Australia)
+61 3 6324 3265 (outside Australia), Fax: +61 3 6324 3048

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, please contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on +61 3 6226 6254 or email human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. Please quote ethics reference number [Hxxxxx]."

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.
If you wish to take part in it, please sign the attached consent form.
This information sheet is for you to keep.

Appendix 28. Information Sheet for Participants of the Study in Ukrainian

Бачення насильства в австралійських й українських ілюстрованих книгах для дітей: перспектива знавців дитячої літератури

[Інформація про Дослідження – це роз'яснення цього дослідження для знавців дитячої літератури, запрошених до участі у проекті, а саме: для вчителів та бібліотекарів]

Запрошення:

Запрошуємо до участі в дослідженні, спрямованому на глибше розуміння того, яку роль присутність/відсутність насильства може відігравати в австралійських та українських ілюстрованих книгах для дітей. Нам важлива Ваша думка щодо того, як саме зображення насильства у текстах та ілюстраціях може бути сприйняте юними читачами.

До складу дослідницької команди входять:

- Анджела Томас (головний науковий керівник), кандидат педагогічних наук, викладачка відділу англістики кафедри педагогіки в Університеті Тасманії
- Деймон Томас, кандидат педагогічних наук, викладач відділу англістики кафедри педагогіки в Університеті Тасманії
- Майкл Коберт, професор соціальних наук, викладач Університету Акадії
- Галина Павлишин, аспірант відділу англістики кафедри педагогіки в Університеті Тасманії

Це дослідження пов'язане з кандидатською дисертацією Галини Павлишин під керівництвом Анджели Томас, Деймона Томаса та Майкла Коберта.

Яка мета цього дослідження?

Це дослідження має на меті поглибити наше розуміння того, яку роль відіграє присутність/відсутність насильства в ілюстрованих книгах для дітей, а також зрозуміти, які види насильства зображені у сучасних ілюстрованих книгах для дітей та чому це так. Окрім того, результати цього дослідження допоможуть зрозуміти, як зображено насильство в сучасних ілюстрованих книгах для дітей, опублікованих в Австралії та Україні впродовж останніх 30-ти років, як знавці дитячої літератури ідентифікують та бачать насильство в дитячій літературі та що з цього випливає. Порівняння зображення та бачення насильства у книгах, створених в Україні та в Австралії, посприяє кращому розумінню того, як культура впливає на сприйняття неоднозначних тем в ілюстрованих книгах для дітей.

Чому мене запросили взяти участь у цьому дослідженні?

Вас запросили взяти участь у цьому дослідженні, тому що Ви володієте знаннями в галузі дитячої літератури, а також тому що маєте досвід спілкування з юними читачами. Це означає, що найбільш імовірно у Вас є можливість приймати рішення про те, які саме книги рекомендувати дітям. Оскільки Ви є знавцем дитячої літератури, до Ваших відгуків про книги часто прислухаються читачі, тому скоріш за все Ви відіграєте роль "хранителя" дитячої літератури у Вашій організації, у Вашій спільноті і, ймовірно, населеному пункті.

Вибір кожного учасника для цього дослідження обумовлений приналежністю до інституції, пов'язаної з книгою (наприклад бібліотека, школа тощо), а також можливістю спілкування з юними читачами. Окрім того, Вас запросили до участі у цьому дослідженні, тому що Ваші колеги схвально відгукнулися про Вас, зазначивши, що Ви є знавцем дитячої літератури, багатими на знання та досвід.

Участь у дослідженні є виявом доброї волі. Ваш внесок у це дослідження є дуже важливим. Оскільки ми вважаємо за необхідне захистити приватність кожного з учасників, уся інформація, надана Вами, залишиться анонімною. Ми зробимо усе можливе, щоб дана інформація була використана лише з метою, зазначеною у цьому документі. Якщо Ви вважатимете за необхідне відмовити у доступі до інформації, наданої Вами під час інтерв'ю, будь ласка, повідомте дослідницьку команду електронним листом. Ви маєте право прийняти таке рішення до, під час або після інтерв'ю. У разі Вашої відмови брати участь у цьому дослідженні ставлення Університету Тасманії до Вас жодним чином не зміниться.

Як саме взяти участь у дослідженні?

Під участю у дослідженні мається на увазі надання розгорнутих відповідей на запитання, які розглядають різні аспекти зображення насильства в ілюстрованих книгах для дітей. Перед інтерв'ю Вас попросять ознайомитися з кількома прикладами того, як насильство може бути зображене в ілюстрованих виданнях для дітей, створених в Австралії та Україні. Під час проведення інтерв'ю Ви зможете висловити свою думку про ці ілюстрації або ж навести власні приклади. Усі відповіді будуть записані на диктофон, а згодом набрані на комп'ютері у формі письмового документу, тут і далі позначеного як 'текст бесіди'. Текст бесіди буде надіслано на Вашу електронну скриньку, щоб Ви могли його прочитати та в разі потреби виправити будь-які неточності. Ми проситимемо внести всі необхідні правки впродовж одного місяця.

Після того як Ви затвердите текст бесіди, всі аудіозаписи будуть знищені. Однак, якщо Ви не бажаєте брати участь в інтерв'ю такого формату, тоді у Вас також є можливість відповісти на всі запитання письмово та надіслати їх дослідникам електронною скринькою. Усі відповіді учасників будуть перекладені Галиною

Павлишин на англійську мову. Якщо ви бажаєте переглянути переклад, будь ласка, повідомте про це під час або після інтерв'ю.

Кожне інтерв'ю триватиме близько 30 хвилин і відбуватиметься у зручному для Вас місці (наприклад бібліотека, школа, кафе тощо).

Якщо Ви надаєте перевагу відповідати на всі запитання письмово, запитання у форматі doc. та візуальні документи у форматі PDF будуть надіслані на Вашу електронну скриньку. Ми просимо не використовувати надіслані Вам зображення в комерційних цілях і не пересилати їх іншим особам. Дякуємо за розуміння!

Приклади запитань, яких варто очікувати під час інтерв'ю:

4. Що Ви думаєте про цю ілюстрацію? Як Ви вважаєте, чи варто дітям у віці 6-7 років читати цю книгу? Будь ласка, поясність чому Ви так вважаєте.
   [Вам показують ілюстрацію з книги]
5. Цей вірш вивчають школярі у п'ятому класі. Яка Ваша думка про це?
   [Вас просять переглянути короткий уривок з вірша]
6. Кому Ви б рекомендували прочитати цю книгу? Чому?

Чому варто взяти участь у цьому дослідженні?

Беручи участь у цьому дослідженні, Ви сприяєте дослідженню дитячої літератури та популяризації української дитячої книги в англомовному академічному середовищі.

Це дослідження несе таку користь для суспільства:

- Окреслення різновидів насильства, які найчастіше зображають в сучасних ілюстрованих книгах для дітей;
- Переосмислення значення насильства в дитячій літературі;
- Глибше розуміння ролі, яку зображення насильства відіграє в ілюстрованих книгах для дітей, а також того, чому ця інформація є важливою для шкіл, бібліотек та інших інституцій, які працюють з дитячою книгою.

Чи безпечно брати участь у цьому дослідженні?

Так, брати участь у цьому дослідженні безпечно. Якщо під час інтерв'ю Ви відчуєте, що запитання про зображення насильства в дитячих книгах Вас засмучують, будь ласка, повідомте про це дослідника і ми припинимо інтерв'ю. В разі виникнення тривожних станів можна проконсультуватися з психологами за телефонами:

- 15 58 – 'Ставропегіон' (цілодобовий телефон довіри в Західних областях)
- 705 04 69 – 'Довіра' (цілодобовий телефон довіри в Східних областях)

Окрім того, всі громадяни України можуть звернутися за фаховою допомогою в режимі он-лайн за адресою: kyiv@dovira.info - "Довіра"

Що станеться, якщо я зміню свою думку щодо участі в дослідженні?

Усі відповіді є анонімними. Ваше ім'я буде замінено на вигадане ім'я, тому ніхто ніколи не здогадається, що саме Ви висловили ту чи іншу думку з приводу зображення

насильства в ілюстрованих книгах для дітей. Однак якщо Ви бажаєте, щоб Ваші відповіді цитували під Вашим справжнім іменем, будь ласка, вкажіть це у письмовій формі, коли підписуватимете Згоду на участь у дослідженні.

У Вас буде один місяць, щоб ознайомитися з текстом бесіди, надісланим на Вашу електронну скриньку, виправити всі неточності та внести всі необхідні зміни.

Ви маєте право відмовитися від участі в дослідженні будь-якої миті, не пояснюючи причини. Для цього необхідно надіслати електронного листа на адресу дослідницької команди, висловлюючи прохання про небажання брати участь у дослідженні. Після цього усі відповіді, надані Вами під час інтерв'ю, будуть вилучені з дослідницької праці та знищені. Ваша відмова жодним чином не вплине на Ваші стосунки з Університетом Тасманії.

Що станеться з інформацією, наданою мною після закінчення дослідження?

Ми піклуємося про захист приватності. Усі аудіозаписи інтерв'ю будуть знищені, щойно Ви затвердите текст бесіди. Усі персональні дані, які можуть вказувати на Вашу особу, будуть зашифровані та замінені вигаданими іменами.

Усі тексти бесіди з вигаданими іменами у них будуть зберігатися на iCloud серверах Університету Тасманії. Інформація буде анонімною та захищеною гаслом. В разі якщо дослідники бажатимуть скористатися цією інформацією для іншого дослідження, вони неодмінно попросять Вашого дозволу перед тим, як це зробити.

Отож, уся інформація надана Вами буде анонімною, захищеною шифрами й вигаданими іменами, та зберігатиметься на серверах захищених гаслом. Ваші ім'я, прізвище та офіційна назва установи в якій Ви працюєте жодним чином не буде згадана в жодних публікаціях.

Де саме будуть опубліковані результати цього дослідження?

Результати цього дослідження будуть оприлюднені шляхом:

- Захисту кандидатської дисертації (англійською мовою);
- Публікації статтей в академічних журналах (англійською та українською мовами);

- Публікації статтей на інтернет-порталах, таких як Medium (англійською та українською мовами);
- Виступів на наукових конференціях (англійською та українською мовами);
- Громадських обговорень у книгарнях та бібліотеках (українською мовою).

Що робити, якщо у мене виникли додаткові запитання про це дослідження?

Якщо у Вас виникли будь-які запитання про це дослідження, будь ласка, надішліть електронного листа дослідницькій команді: Галині Павлишин (halyna.pavlyshyn@utas.edu.au) – якщо бажаєте спілкуватися українською мовою, або

Анджелі Томас (angela.thomas@utas.edu.au), Демонові Томасу (damon.thomas@utas.edu.au) чи Майклові Кобертові (michel.corbett@utas.edu.au) – якщо Ваш лист написаний англійською мовою.

Окрім того, Ви можете написати паперового листа і надіслати його за цією адресою:

Locked Bag 1307, Launceston, Tasmania 7250, Australia

Або подзвонити за телефоном: + 61 3 6324 3265

Це дослідження було схвалене Комітетом з питань Етики при відділі Соціальних Наук (КЕСН) Університету Тасманії. Якщо у Вас виникли будь-які коментарі, скарги чи пропозиції, будь ласка, зверніться до Голови Комітету (КЕМСН) у Тасманії, подзвонивши за номером +61 3 6226 6254 або надіславши електронного листа на адресу human.ethics@utas.edu.au. Голова Комітету є уповноваженим відповідати на запитання, скарги та пропозиції (англійською мовою). У разі контакту, будь ласка, вказуйте номер [H16888], якщо йдеться про це дослідження.

Дякуємо, що знайшли час ознайомитися з описом цього дослідження!
Якщо Ви бажаєте взяти участь у цьому дослідженні, будь ласка, підпишіть Згоду.
Документ з описом дослідження є Вашою власністю. Щиро дякуємо!

Appendix 29. Consent Form in English

The interpretation of violence represented in Australian and Ukrainian picturebooks by the gatekeepers of children's literature

[The consent form is for gatekeepers of children's literature including: publishers, editors, librarians and teachers of secondary school who work with picturebooks]

1. I agree to take part in the research study named above.
2. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.
3. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
4. I understand that the study involves audio-recorded interviews during which the questions about violence in picturebooks are to be asked, and the books shown to me are to be discussed. I am aware that I will be given an opportunity to review transcripts and correct any information in them.
5. I understand that participation involves the risk of a minor psychological discomfort which might be triggered by the conversation about violence. However, I am aware that in the unlikely event of any distress, I can contact free of charge counseling services, using the following phone numbers: 13 11 14 (24/7, in Australia), 15 58 (24/7, in Western Ukraine), 705 04 69 (24/7, in Eastern Ukraine) or contact the counseling service available by e-mail: kyiv@dovira.info (in Ukraine)
6. I understand that all the transcripts and their translations to English (with no mentioning of name, surname and gender) will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania iCloud drive for five years from the publication of the study results, and will then be destroyed.

   I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for five years from the PhD thesis submission, and will then be destroyed unless I give permission for my data to be stored in an archive.

   I agree to have my study data archived.

   Yes ☐ No ☐
7. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
8. I understand that the researchers will maintain confidentiality and that any information I supply to the researchers will be used only for the purposes of the research.
9. I understand that the results of the study will be published so that I cannot be identified as a participant. All the direct quotes will be signed by the fictional names to protect my identity unless I specify that I would prefer to be mentioned.
10. **Please specify if you choose your name to be mentioned in the direct quotes by saying yes to the following question:**

    I agree to be identified as a participant in the publication of the study results.

Yes ☐ No ☐

11. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any effect. If I choose to withdraw from the study I agree to send a short written notice to the student investigator Halyna Pavlyshyn: halyna.pavlyshyn@utas.edu

Participant's name: _____

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Statement by Investigator

☐ I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked.

☐ The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have had the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

Investigator's name: _____

Investigator's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 30. Consent Form in Ukrainian

Бачення насильства в австралійських й українських ілюстрованих книгах для дітей: перспектива знавців дитячої літератури

[Згода на участь у Дослідженні створена для знавців дитячої літератури, запрошених до участі у проекті, а саме: для вчителів та бібліотекарів]

1. Я погоджуюся брати участь у цьому дослідженні.
2. Я ознайомилася/ознайомився з Інформацією про Дослідження.
3. Мені пояснили, як відбуватиметься це дослідження, яка його мета та як оприлюднюватимуться результати цього дослідження.
4. Я розумію, що це дослідження передбачає аудіозапис моїх відповідей на запитання дослідниці, які стосуватимуться зображення насильства в ілюстрованих книгах для дітей. Я усвідомлюю, що матиму можливість виправити будь-які неточності та внести будь-які зміни у текст бесіди зі мною, наданий мені дослідницею після транкрибування. Мені відомо, що у мене буде один місяць на внесення усіх правок.
5. Я розумію, що беручи участь у цьому дослідженні – я в безпеці. Якщо розмови про зображення насильства в дитячій літературі спричинять смуток чи тривогу, я завжди можу припинити відповідати на запитання дослідниці та скористатися телефоном довіри: 15 58 (24/7, 'Ставропегіон' у Західній Україні, цілодобово), 705 04 69 (24/7, 'Довіра' у Східній Україні, цілодобово) або написавши електронного листа за адресою: kyiv@dovira.info (24/7 'Довіра', для всіх громадян України незалежно від місця проживання).
6. Я розумію, що вся інформація, надана мною (за винятком мого імені, прізвища та назви організації, в якій я працюю), буде зберігатися на серверах iCloud Університету Тасманії. Однак, якщо я забороню архівувати цю інформацію, то вона буде вилучена та знищена.

   Я дозволяю архівувати інформацію, надану мною: Так ☐ Ні ☐
7. Мені відповіли на всі мої додаткові запитання.
8. Я усвідомлюю, що вся інформація, яку я надаю, є анонімною і що її використовуватимуть лише з метою дослідження дитячої літератури.
9. Я розумію, що результати дослідження будуть оприлюднені і що мої ім'я, прізвище та назва організації, в якій я працюю, не будуть згадані жодним чином. В разі цитування усі мої відповіді на запитання будуть підписані вигаданими іменами. Виняток буде зроблено лише для осіб, які наполягатимуть, щоб їхнє ім'я було вказано, та які зазначать це у письмовій формі.
10. **Якщо Ви наполягаєте, щоб Ваше ім'я та назва Вашої організації були згадані при публікації результатів цього дослідження, будь ласка, підтвердіть це на письмі, схваливши наступне твердження:**

Я наполягаю, щоб моє ім'я та/чи назву моєї організації було вказано при оприлюдненні результатів дослідження: Так ☐ Ні ☐

11. Я розумію, що моя участь у цьому дослідженні є виявом доброї волі і що я маю право відмовитися від участі у цьому дослідженні без жодних пояснень. В разі якщо я хочу, щоб уся інформація, надана мною, була вилучена та знищена, я погоджуюся написати електронного листа Галині Павлишин (halyna.pavlyshyn@utas.edu), чітко сформулювавши моє прохання.

Ім'я учасника: _____
Підпис учасника: _____
Дата: _____

Присяга дослідника

☐ Я описала дане дослідження цій учасниці / цьому учасникові, пояснивши, як проходитиме дослідження та яким чином будуть оприлюднені результати цього дослідження. Я вірю, що учасниця зрозуміла / учасник зрозумів все сказане мною, і що згода на участь є добровільною.

Якщо дослідниця не мала можливості поговорити з учасницею / учасником:

☐ Учасниця отримала / учасник отримав Інформацію про Дослідження, у якій зазначені мої контактні дані. Отож, учасники мали змогу поставити мені всі запитання, які бажали, перед підписанням Згоди на Участь у Дослідженні.

Ім'я дослідника: _____
Підпис дослідника: _____
Дата: _____

Appendix 31. Example of a Picturebook Text that Represents Violence

The original text of *Blossom Possum: The sky is falling down-under* (2007) written by Gina Newton and illustrated by Kilmeny Niland:

a n

d

a

a n.

a n
d
a a n.

a n

d

a a n.

Appendix 32. Example of a Book Blurb on a Picturebook Cover

The text on the back cover of *Blossom Possum: The sky is falling down-under* (2007):

"Early one morning, Blossom Possum gets a fright - she thinks the sky is falling down! She has to tell someone, so she sets off with her news. On the way she meets her bush mates. But she also runs into trouble. This re-telling of a favourite [British] folk tale has a delightful Aussie twist".

Appendix 33. Example of My Retelling of a Story to Research Participants

My retelling of *Blossom Possum: The sky is falling down-under* (2007) with the focus on the fight scene for the purpose of this study:

The story tells about the possum called Blossom Possum who is convinced that the sky is falling. Blossom Possum decides to see the prime minister and tell them all about it. And so, she starts a journey-quest and meets new friends on the way. During her journey, the cute little animals are facing the danger of being trapped and eaten by dingo and his family. However, the possum and her friends are rescued by two kangaroos and an emu. Eventually, the friends run away from dingo; they return home safe. And… the cup is falling on Blossom Possum's head.

On this book-spread [here, I would show the illustrations to the research participants], we can see the scene of the "rescue". The words are**:** "Then You-Beaut Bunyip stepped on By-Jingo Dingo's tail and Didgeridoo Kangaroo boxed his ears, while Blossom Possum, Rocky Cocky, Joanna Goanna, Toey Joey, Abacus Platypus and Echo Gecko ran away as fast as they could".