

## **Appendix A: Ethics statement and letters of permission**

### A.1. Ethics statement

#### **Statement of Ethics**

To whom it may concern:

*As a primary school teacher, I am aware that I am in a position of responsibility and trust. I realise that I have the power to influence children.*

*Therefore, it is my promise that, while carrying out this research, I will observe the highest possible ethical standards. I will maintain the highest integrity at all times regarding data gathering. I will only report information that is in the public domain and within the law.*

*I will avoid plagiarism and fully acknowledge the work of others to which I have referred in my report. I will report my findings honestly and truthfully. I consider the research project worthwhile and of benefit to my students. Covert data gathering will not be a feature of my study. While acknowledging the rights of all the research participants, I also retain the right to report, providing that I have complied with all the ethical protocols outlined here.*

- I acknowledge that I am the focus of the research, which is being carried out with a view to improving my practice.
- The permission of my Principal and of the School Board will be obtained prior to the research study being carried out.
- The permission of the children and the written consent of their parents will be obtained prior to the study.
- The improvement in the learning of the children is of paramount concern to me.
- The children, as collaborators in the research, will be made aware regularly that research is going on.
- At no time will the research detract from the normal work of the class.
- Strict confidentiality will be adhered to. No names will be included in the written report.
- Parents will be kept apprised of all stages of the study and will have the democratic right to withdraw their children from the project at any time.
- I will have the permission of the parents to use the videotapes and/or written transcripts in the future for teaching or writing purposes.

Signed



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Mary Roche

A.2. Letter to Chairperson of Board of management requesting permission to carry out research

*For the attention of The Board of Management*

**February 2002**

**Dear Fr. I [redacted] and Members of The Board,**

As you are already aware, I am currently pursuing a course of studies leading to a doctoral degree in education from the University of Limerick. With this in mind, I now wish to seek the permission of the Board to carry out some research in my classroom.

I would be grateful for this permission and for your support. I am the focus of the research and I aim to reflect on, evaluate and hopefully, improve my practice. In this study I am investigating the use of a programme called "Thinking Time" to promote higher-order thinking in my students.

My data collection methods may include some or all of the following: audio and videotaping, photographs, observations, interviews, research diary entries and anecdotal reports. I have sought and gained the permission of the principal and written consents from my students' parents.

I guarantee total confidentiality of information. I will only report information that is in the public domain and within the law. I will not reveal anything of a personal or comprising nature. If I intend to use information that is in any way sensitive I will seek the permission of the originator before using it. There will also be total confidentiality of all names and I will not name the school without permission. At some future time if I should wish to include transcript excerpts in a book and/or videotapes for teaching purposes, I have been given permission to do so.

**Is mise,  
Le meas,**

*Mary Roche*

**Máire de Róiste**

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*To whom it may concern,*

Mary Roche has the permission of this Board of Management to carry out an action research self-study in her classroom and in this school, as described above.

**Signed**

[Redacted signature box]  
*[Handwritten initials]*

A.3. Letter to principal requesting permission to carry out research

*For the attention of the School Principal*

20-02-02

[redacted] a chara,

I wish to carry out a research project in my classroom, as part of a doctoral degree in education with the University of Limerick. I would be grateful for your permission and support. I am the focus of the research and I aim to reflect on, evaluate and hopefully, improve my practice. Over the course of the next three years I aim to investigate the use of a programme called "Thinking Time" to promote higher-order thinking in my students. This work builds on and develops the work that I carried out for my MA in Education.

My data collection methods may include some or all of the following: audio and videotaping, photographs, observations, interviews, research diary entries and anecdotal reports. I intend to invite you and my teaching colleagues to collaborate with me in regular critical evaluations of the study. With your permission also, I intend to invite the parents of my students to view video-recordings of the classroom discussions from time to time and to provide me with feedback. I may at some future time wish to use the discussion transcripts in a book and/or videotapes for teaching purposes. I have sought and gained parental permission.

I guarantee confidentiality of information. I will only report information that is in the public domain and within the law. I will not reveal anything of a personal or comprising nature. If I intend to use information that is in any way sensitive I will seek the permission of the originator before using it. There will also be total confidentiality of pupils', teachers' and parents' names and I will not name the school without permission.

Is mise,  
Le meas,



Mary Roche

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*To whom it may concern*

I give permission to Mary Roche to carry out an action research self-study in her classroom and in this school, as described above.

Signed



A.4. Letter to parents requesting co-operation, permission to carry out research and to use recorded transcripts

**Ethics statement and Parents' Consent form**

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**Dear Parents,**

I am currently carrying out some research for a postgraduate study with the University of Limerick. The focus of the study is an investigation into my work in the area of stimulating dialogue and discussion in the classroom, through the use of a process called 'Thinking Time'.

To carry out this investigation I will be using a variety of data gathering techniques. These will include **audio** and **videotape** as well as **transcripts** of the class discussions.

In writing up the report of my study, I will observe the strictest confidentiality – neither the school nor the children will be named. You will already have seen an example of a transcript on 'Beauty' included in your child's February workbook and you will notice that the children's names do not appear on it. There are other examples on the school's website at <http://www.stmarys.limerick.ie> under the heading 'Thinking Time'. I would welcome feedback from you regarding any aspects of 'Thinking Time'. Any feedback you do submit will be also treated with the utmost confidentiality.

The main focus of the research is on my teaching processes rather than on the children, but I need their co-operation - and yours - in order to carry out the study. By observing and listening to the children and by reflecting on the transcripts, I will get valuable insights into my practice. You and they are my research collaborators in this study and have a right to read the transcripts at any time.

Another part of my study will involve workshops for teachers to familiarise them with 'Thinking Time'. I may wish to use some of the videos and transcripts as demonstrations. Be assured that all tapes will remain in my possession and will only ever be used in a teaching situation. All tapes and scripts will be treated with the utmost respect. It is possible that the results of this study will be published in a book. I would like your permission to include transcripts – and again, the strictest confidentiality will be observed.

You have the right to refuse permission for your child to co-operate. Should you wish to do so, I guarantee that your refusal will not in any way affect my relationship with you or your child. Please feel free to come and chat with me about any queries you may have.

*Thanking you for your co-operation,*

**Mary Roche, 19th March 2003**

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**I give permission for my child to collaborate in this research project.**

**Signed: ----- Parent/Guardian**

A.5. Letter to parents of Junior Infants (2002-2003) accompanying sample transcript (original sample transcript consisted of several pages)

✓ Please return bottom portion of back sheet

[given to parents on  
12/02/02]

11-02-02

Dear Parents,

The following is a copy of a transcript of the discussion we had on a poem. (Copy of poem attached). The children's names have been deleted to preserve anonymity. Despite the fact that this initial session was very teacher driven – a question and answer session – I think you'll agree that some of the responses are very imaginative and even lyrical. My aim would be that, by the end of this school year, the children would be able to sustain a discussion on a topic without much intervention from me. Sometimes they will know the topic in advance. If you would like to read other transcripts, as time goes on, I will be happy to make them available to you.

Please read the accompanying letter carefully. If you have any questions, do come and talk to me.

Mary

Wednesday 30-01-02. 11.45am

*Facilitation: Children had been to yard. Seated in a circle, tables pushed to both sides of room. Good listening throughout. Poem had been read aloud twice on preceding days and was read again when children were in circle prior to discussion. Girls and boys contributed equally. Only two children 'passed' consistently. Two children were absent. Three children who rarely speak in class were remarkably animated in this discussion.*

Transcript : Colours

From 'First poems for thinking' - Robert Fisher

**Q1** What do the first lines mean when they say, "The colours live between black and white"?

- : Black is the first colour and white is the last and red is one of the last
- : All the colours are in between black and white

**Q3** What do you think the poet means by 'knowing best isn't everything'?

- : Cos some people are best too at different things

**Q4** In what way do colours dance?

- : I think they have some legs
- : With paintbrushes – when you paint
- : They could flop around when someone makes play dough

A.6. Sample letters to colleagues requesting co-operation and participation in aspects of my research



28/02/05

Dear Colleagues

I am putting together a paper for ESAI conference on workplace learning. I need some evidence for my claim that I have influenced others educationally. I am using mainly stuff about Thinking Time and how I have influenced others through workshops, disseminating stuff, talking informally about Thinking Time etc....anything that illustrates my claim really. For example I intend, with participants' permission to relate some bits of conversation where people have expressed to me how their own thinking has been affected. If you can add anything at all, please do. Think about this over the weekend and let me have it (Mon or Tues (paper has to be delivered to ESAI Wed))

Mary Roche

A.7. Letter to participants in workshop requesting permission to use evaluations.

**Please take a few moments to read carefully through this sheet**

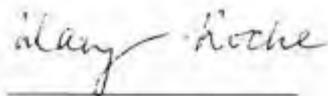
**‘Introduction to Thinking Time’**

Dear Colleagues,

I am currently pursuing doctoral studies in the University of Limerick and to that end I am carrying out a piece of research on my practice as a teacher. I have been examining the effect that Thinking Time has in my classroom both for my students and for myself. The focus of the research is my own practice and the learning that I am gaining from doing Thinking Time. With the support of my principal and colleagues, I have also been working on getting Thinking Time established throughout our school. This, too, has been a huge learning experience for me. Now I am focussing on the wider academic field, and it is my aim through this and subsequent workshops, to facilitate other teachers in doing Thinking Time in their own contexts. Again, it is my own practice that is under scrutiny.

I would be very grateful to have your permission to use any evaluation or feedback that you might give me, as data for my research. I will guarantee total confidentiality and promise not to reveal your name or the name of your school, should you have chosen to sign the evaluation. Following this workshop, I will invite all participants to fill out an evaluation sheet. If you wish to have your evaluation used, please select the ‘Yes’ option at the top of the sheet; if not, select ‘No’.

Thank you for your co-operation.



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Mary Roche

A.8. Letter to participants on summer course requesting permission to use their evaluations

Please take a few moments to read carefully through this sheet.

**Thinking Time and the Revised Curriculum**  
Cork Education Support Centre,  
July 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> 2003

Dear Colleagues,

I am currently pursuing doctoral studies at the University of Limerick and to that end I am carrying out some research on my practice as a teacher. I have been examining the effect that 'Thinking Time' has in my own practice and the learning I gained from doing it. With the support of my principal and colleagues, I have been working on getting 'Thinking Time' established throughout our school. Now I am looking at how I can facilitate other teachers in doing 'Thinking Time' in their own contexts.

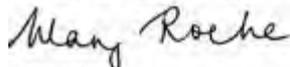
My research is in three phases

- In my classroom
- In my school context
- In the wider educational field

(In all these areas, it is my own practice that is under scrutiny).

I would be very grateful to have your permission to use any evaluation or feedback that you might give me, as data for my research. I will guarantee total confidentiality and promise not to reveal your name or the name of your school, should you choose to sign the evaluation. Following this course all participants will be invited to fill out an evaluation sheet. If you wish to give me permission to use your words in my data archive, please select the 'YES' option attached to the sheet; if not, select 'NO'.

Thank you for your co-operation.

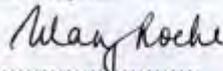
  
Mary Roche

A.9. Sample letter to parents requesting permission to include specific photos in thesis document

Dear Parents

I am currently completing a postgrad thesis and may wish to include photos of classroom practice in it. Attached are the photos that relate to when your child was in 3<sup>rd</sup> class with me. I would be very grateful for your permission to include photos that have your child in them. If you give your permission to have your child's photo included, please indicate below and return the permission slip to your child's current teacher.

Best regards



**To whom it may concern: I give my permission to have my child's photo included in Mary Roche's thesis.**

Signed....  ... Date ..... 15/02/07 .....

A.10. Letters to principal (and reply) requesting permission to include specific data in thesis document

10-04-07

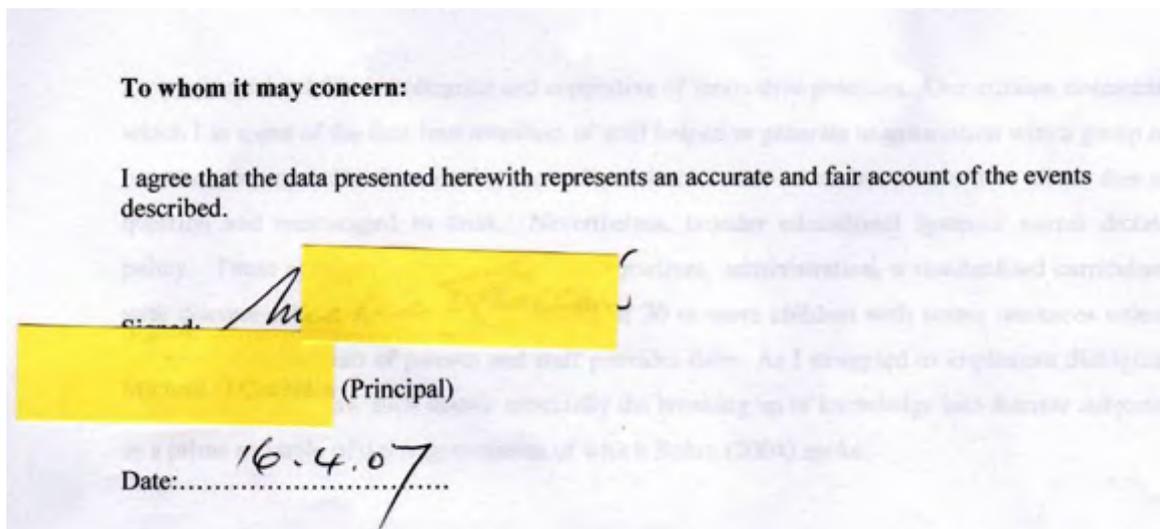
Dear M \_\_\_\_\_

Please find attached herewith an excerpt from my draft thesis document outlining some difficulties we mutually encountered when I was first putting my ideas into practice. Please take time to read the account. I would be grateful if you would sign the permission slip if you are happy to have the extract included as it stands. If you are not happy to have it included, I will delete it.

Regards

Mary

[TO NOTE: The attached text in question was an extract from 'Encountering Dilemmas' pp.163-166 of draft]



A.11. Letter to parents inviting them to view filmed classroom Thinking Times and requesting permission to use video clips in thesis

**Evaluation of Thinking Time Video 25-05-06**

Dear Parent/s

Now that you've seen an example of Thinking Time in action I would be grateful for any comments. Perhaps the questions below might be of help in formulating your response: (PLEASE NOTE it is **not necessary** to answer any of these questions - they are merely there as guidelines. Your answers can be negative as well as positive - all comments will be welcomed.)

**Please sign and date any evaluation to indicate that I have your permission to use some or all of your words in my thesis.**

*For example - did you think the children were attentive? Did you consider that they listened to each other and built on each other's ideas? Did I as teacher appear to be leading the children to think in any certain way? Were the children displaying that they can think for themselves? Is this a valuable lesson, do you think? One aspect of their critical thinking lessons is that the children are learning to critique stories, not for their immediate content but for the underlying assumptions - is this relevant in today's society? Did you feel that the children were comfortable within the circle format? Did the children appear to be enjoying the session? Would you like to see more of these videos? Any other comments?*

If you wish to see more of the videos, please indicate whether next **Tues 6th or Wed 7th June at 7.30 p.m.** is suitable for you.

Please tick your preference:

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30 p.m.

I would also like to have your permission to submit some videos with my thesis and possibly, to use them in teaching contexts at workshops and conferences. The children's identities will not be made known.

Please sign below if you wish to give your permission:

Signed M. [redacted] ..... Parent/Guardian

Date: 2-6-06

Le meas

*Mary*

A.12. Letter to children & parents requesting permission to include samples their work in my thesis

06-02-07

Dear -----

I would like your permission to include some of your written work with my thesis. I have chosen it because I think it shows clearly that you are a critical and creative person who can think for yourself. If you give me permission, tick the 'yes' box and if you would rather not tick the 'no' box. I will respect your wishes either way.

Le meas.

Máire Bn de Róiste

Yes

*I give my teacher Bean de Róiste permission to include my work in her thesis.*

NO

*I do not give my teacher Bean de Róiste permission to include my work in her thesis.*

Signed..... Date .....

06-02-07

Dear -----

Your child ----- has given her/his permission for samples of written and art work to be included in my thesis. I would like also like to have your permission. I have chosen the work because I think it shows clearly that your child is a critical and creative person who can think for her/himself. If you wish to give me permission, tick the 'yes' box, and if not tick the 'no' box. I will respect your wishes either way.

Le meas.

Máire de Róiste

Yes

*I give my teacher Bean de Róiste permission to include my work in her thesis.*

NO

*I do not give my teacher Bean de Róiste permission to include my work in her thesis.*

Signed..... Date .....

## **Appendix B Validations and Evaluations**

### **B.1. Evaluations by teaching colleagues of my educative influence**

#### **a. Evaluation by teaching colleague JM**

Mary Roche has influenced me educationally in a number of ways but especially through thinking time. I've had numerous discussions on the topic of thinking time with Mary. These discussions have strongly influenced my perception of thinking time. Thinking time allows the child's mind to go where, no other lesson could take them. There is no rigid structure and children are allowed to participate in 'free thinking'. Upon observing a thinking time lesson in Mary Roche's class I found this to be very true. The children were not under pressure to give a right answer and they were very at ease. The child's opinion on a topic is given equal status to that of the teacher and any other adult. They are not been taught to think in certain way. Thinking time also gives children the opportunity to engage a whole group, not just the teacher. Through thinking time the children become aware of the importance of turn-taking and voicing an opinion. The children were also aware of the importance of listening to others and questioning their opinions.

The best example of 'free-thinking' I have experienced is when a child, who was a cardiac baby was asked who she thought invented time. She said " I think doctors invented time. They gave me more time to live when I was a baby". I felt this was a brilliant example of a child expressing her true feelings without any pressure to come up with a right answer.

Jc  
J

28-02-05

#### **b. Evaluation by teaching colleague DOS**

I was born into a world and educated in a system where adults had a monopoly on wisdom. Children were literally expected to be seen and not heard. It isn't an exaggeration to claim that children's thinking, in that milieu, wasn't so much undervalued, as accorded no value. While always attempting to value children's opinion (and thinking) in my own teaching, it wasn't until I came to work in Scoil N., where Thinking Time is a core value of the school, that I was exposed to an educational setting where children's thinking was accorded importance and value. I have been most impressed, not only by this liberating approach towards pupil/teacher interaction but also by the stress which is placed on the improvement of children's thought processes.

Mary Roche has always stressed the centrality of the guiding hand of the teacher in the facilitation of Thinking Time. Thinking Time is not an open-ended, laissez faire unstructured, directionless activity – but demands instead, a high degree of skilful guidance from the teacher. This subtlety of approach is vital in that it facilitates the pupil to improve the quality of their thinking, while still allowing them the 'space' to actually think for themselves.

DO'S. 28 February 2005

c. Evaluation by teaching colleague LOS

When I was first introduced to Thinking Time I was really excited about trying it out. I was very impressed with the reaction I received from the children, their enthusiasm in voicing their opinions and their varied ideas. I had worked quite a lot on language development in my previous school, and I encouraged my colleagues there to try this approach. I was amazed at the language used by junior infants when speaking and also the language gained from listening to other children.

LO'S 27 February 2005

d. Extract from transcript of conversation with LOS

Conversation with L [redacted] about Thinking Time: September/October 2004

*L [redacted]: I was up in Dublin for my 'going away night' with my old staff and I was telling them all about Thinking Time and telling them it's the best oral language programme I've ever seen! They were laughing at my enthusiasm! But I kept telling them 'No! Honestly, You'll just have to try it. Its great! I mean it!' They thought I was hilarious!*

Conversation excerpt February 2005: L [redacted]'s classroom Tuesday 28-02-05

*L [redacted] I find that even as I'm learning more about doing these discussions I'm now noticing more: like, for example who contributes and who doesn't and I'm wondering for example what can I do to try and make it better....could I come up and watch your class doing one some afternoon? I'd like to see one done with an older group..*

L [redacted] Do you agree that this is an accurate account of our conversation? Do you want to add anything or change anything or edit it in any way?

Mary

[redacted]

e. Evaluation by teaching colleague ML

Mary has really influenced me as a teacher as regards approaching philosophy with children. She encourages us to challenge the children (regardless of their age) with what I would previously have regarded as 'adult' topics of conversation. It has been a learning experience for me to discuss heaven and spirituality with an infant class. I am amazed at the dept of thought children at age 5 and 6 can have! The support given through workshops and our 'ideas file' have also been invaluable.  
ML 01 March 2005

f. Extract from transcript of conversation with ML

Conversation about Thinking Time: Staff meeting January 2005

M. [redacted]: I must tell you about an amazing Thinking Time we did on Heaven. It was just brilliant! I couldn't believe what they came up with. I was really surprised that children so young could hold a discussion like this. And they loved it!

Conversation excerpt February 2005: M. [redacted]'s classroom Tuesday 22-02-05

M. [redacted]: There was another amazing occurrence at Thinking Time today. Its brilliant what they can say. For example one child said: ...

M. [redacted], can you fill in the words that you thought were so advanced in the Thinking Time? Do you agree that this is an accurate account of our conversation? Do you want to add anything or change anything or edit it in any way?

Mary

7 Discussion: "What is your soul?"

Your soul is what controls you. ~~So~~ It makes you "you".  
You have your soul all your life, you can't lose it.

Your spirit & your soul go through your bones & your body  
Your spirit is what makes your feelings work!

Your soul / spirit helps you love people. It's all white, and  
when you die it comes out of your body & goes to heaven  
Your body stays in the ground.

Your soul is like your brain - it controls you.

g. Evaluation by teaching colleague SB

Thinking Time was a new idea to me as a teacher. There is a strong emphasis on the oral section of the revised English curriculum on teaching children to speak, and thinking has also been recognised as a priority. Thinking Time helps to develop speaking and thinking skills in children as young as Junior Infants. Thinking Time

allows children explore ideas in a creative way affording them the chance to be innovative. However, this was an area of my teaching that I feel was underdeveloped and through Mary's stewardship this is changing. The workshops are practical and specific to the teachers on staff. But far more helpful is the fact that as Mary is a teacher on staff, she is accessible (more or less) on a daily basis for questions or direction. Thinking time makes a lot more sense the more you do! This year the file with suggestions was particularly helpful.  
SB 23 February 2005

h. Evaluation by teaching colleague SD

Since using Thinking Time I have stopped taking mundane things for granted and now question more as to why things are the way they are. The experience of doing weekly Thinking Time sessions has made me appreciate others' point of view and have pride in my own judgement. In my teaching it has encouraged me to step back and give extra time for the class to express their opinion. The atmosphere in the room is more accepting of different ideas and opinions. The benefits of our Thinking Time sessions have enhanced the children's skills in many aspects; verbal reasoning, critical thinking, social skills, moral development etc.

My colleagues value the benefits of Thinking Time. It is a respected worthwhile activity that is a priority in Scoil N. As a staff we pride ourselves in being progressive and tapping into this fun activity that comes so naturally to the children. Mary you been very encouraging and supportive and I am delighted you shared your knowledge with us.  
SD 01 March 2005

i. Emailed evaluation from teaching colleague RL

**Sent:** 06 March 2005 09:23  
**To:** Mary Roche  
**Subject:** Thinking Time!

Hi Mary!

At last! I'm sorry for the delay in getting this to you--it's just been another madly busy week! Hope this is what you are looking for!!

The first day I came to Scoil N [redacted], through a casual conversation that we were having, Mary introduced me to the concept of thinking time. I was immediately interested ;children thinking laterally and creatively, speaking in turn and listening to each other; I wanted to know more! I worked in the Junior Infant section with Mary that year. During our regular planning meetings, we would often discuss Thinking Time. As a 'new recruit' to the idea, I listened to Mary talk about topics that they had discussed in her class, ways in which she facilitated the setting up of the circle with 30 Junior Infants etc. Through these discussions, I picked up many ideas which I later tried out in my own classroom. At first, I felt even the fact of setting up the circle and allowing each child as chance to say something, and listen as their classmates contributed was a major achievement in itself!! However, as the year progressed, I was looking for ways of taking the topics a little further or stretching their thinking a little more. I would have heard Mary explain how she would sometimes ask a child to clarify a point or add a comment or question in response to a point made by a child. This might lead the discussion off in a slightly different direction. This proved to be very useful to me in facilitating Thinking Times.

During that year, I also attended a workshop presented by Mary on Thinking Time. I found that each time I took part in a discussion or debate on the concept, or actually did a Thinking Time with other adults as we did at this workshop, I learned something new. Mary's knowledge of, belief in, and enthusiasm for Thinking Time certainly infected the large group of us present that morning!

Three years later, I still regularly do Thinking Time with my class. I still need help with ideas, though I feel more confident in seeing opportunities now which arise naturally in class, through the telling of a story, a comment made in class et. Mary continues to be very supportive and encouraging. I find the file that Mary put together for each member of the staff very helpful. Thanks Mary!

j. Extract from transcript of conversation with SC

Transcript of conversation with S [redacted] C [redacted] 07-12-06

I have picked up loads of teaching tips in your classroom during my teaching practice. I like the way you explained the maths. I like Thinking Time most of all though, and I can't wait to have a class of my own to do that. I think its brilliant. I think I'd also like to film the discussions like you do and use them as further Thinking Times....or maybe show them to the children afterwards and see if they still agree with what they said.

I love the way the children are able to get the room ready and put the room back in order all by themselves – you'd know they liked doing Thinking Time because there's no messing or fuss.

I like the way they listen so nicely to each other and the way they build up on each other's ideas. I can't get over the way a child says 'I agree with x or I disagree with y...' and then you realise that it was ages since that child spoke and they've listened to everything in between and still remember who said what. And there's no unkindness or embarrassment or sneering. They don't get upset at all when people disagree with their ideas. They seem to sort of say 'Hmmm...she disagrees with what I said...maybe she has a point'. Or 'he thinks that and I think that...that's interesting'.

I also like the way that the children and teacher are kind of on the same level of importance in the discussion and there are no right answers or wrong answers. It's very fair; very democratic. They really are thinking in those discussions. I've been amazed at some of the thoughts they've had and I found myself thinking 'that's an interesting angle...I didn't see that myself'. It's really good for them.

Yes. I'm definitely going to do it with my own class!

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*To whom it may concern: I agree that the above represents an accurate account of my part in our conversation.*

Signed: S [redacted]

Date: 8/12/06

k. Evaluation from school principal MOC

Scott J. [redacted]

Workplace Learning

I am principal of a new primary school in Cork City. We were established in 2000 A.D.

I have always believed that critical reasoning could be developed more successfully in pupils than heretofore. I was so impressed by the philosophy and structure of "Thinking Time", I have made it one of the cornerstones of our new English school plan.

As a consequence, it is my belief that because of Mary Roche's educative influence on the majority of the staff of 14 teachers, they have been imbued with the spirit and culture of Thinking Time.

I lecture part-time to teachers on "Educational Practices and Theory" in the Cork Institute of Technology, a third level institution in the city. Because I consider this subject to be important to teachers and because of her educative influence on me, I give 2 lectures in a 10 lecture series on Critical Questioning and Thinking.

M  
Pr [redacted]

24.2.04

1. Evaluation by deputy principal SOL

**Thinking time**

Thinking time has been a foundation stone for educational policy in our school since 2001. Mary Roche, by introducing the concept to the school has changed my way of thinking as a teacher. I now realise that philosophical debate is achievable even with very young children and that this discussion can be based on simple every day issues as well as stories and poems.

Learning about thinking time has made me more aware of the importance of developing critical thinking as a life skill for the children we teach. Turn taking, listening, assimilating information, agreement, disagreement, tolerance and discussion have become a way of life for both the children and the teachers in our school. I am now very aware that the teacher is not the only "font of knowledge" in the classroom and I encourage the children to look to each other for information and solutions to problems.

I have discovered that Thinking Time facilitates learning and therefore impacts on all other areas of the Curriculum e.g. clarity of thought, the childrens' expressive skills. It is a subject –method of teaching that caters for the needs of all our pupils, ranging from the literal to the inferential, and is very much in line with the demands of the curriculum from the point of view of differentiation.

Thinking time cannot be limited to a subject area. It permeates the school day. It encourages children and teachers to think, communicate and interact in a different way.

Deputy Principal  
  
28.2.05

m. Evaluation by teaching colleague DOS regarding focus group

As part of my research methodology while undertaking research for a Master's dissertation, I facilitated two separate Focus Group interview sessions. Each focus group consisted of six, nine-year-old pupils from the two 3rd classes in our school. Both interview sessions were of one hour duration (approx). Our topic for discussion was the pupils' experience with a digital media resource in the computer lab over five sessions.

I was very impressed with a number of factors during the focus group undertakings:

- The critical awareness of the children
- The willingness of each individual child to share their personal opinion

- The genuine manner in which all participants listened to the opinions of the other members of the group
- The mature way in which disagreements of opinion were handled – the disagreement was with the *opinions* of others and no personal dimension attached to the disagreement
- The manner in which individuals accepted that others would disagree with them
- The manner in which individual children gave the reason why they disagreed with the opinions of others
- The manner in which individual children developed a point made by another pupil with whom they were in agreement.

The manner in which the ‘cut and thrust’ of argument and of dialogue was handled within the focus groups was most impressive in the context of the participants’ ages (9 years old). It was a display of maturity and genuine rapport not previously encountered by this practitioner of thirty year’s experience.

I attribute the uncommon skill with which the children handled the demands of a focus group setting to their experience of the dialogic process of their weekly Thinking Time sessions in Scoil N.

D----- O’S----- 14 June 2006

B.2. Evaluation by colleague from former school

To Whom it may concern,

I am currently studying for an M.Ed. and was recently asked in a seminar run by Dr. P. [redacted] [redacted] to describe a powerful learning experience. I immediately thought of the very first time when I used Manj's version of classroom discussion - I was an instant and fervent fan.

I have used this format of classroom discussion since that first "try-out" over ten years ago. I have found it to be an enriching and empowering way of "being" with my pupils and only wish that I had known of it much earlier in my teaching career. This version of classroom discussion has, in my opinion, had a significant, positive effect on class dynamics in my classroom. It fosters a warm, respectful and supportive relationship between the children and between the children and myself. The children, I think, learn to think for themselves and blossom in a classroom climate that encourages "free" thinking and non-teacher led discussion.

For myself, I have found Manj's classroom discussion format a humbling and salutary lesson - the comments and insights offered by the children frequently leave me speechless, literally. Over the years, I have come to understand just how discerning and sophisticated children can

be in their thinking. I cherish classroom discussion time, as do the children. We enjoy everything about the experience - the circle format which allows eye-contact, the clearly-defined rules of engagement - which the children and I decide on, together, at the start of the year, and the feeling of us all having the freedom to chew the cud at will.

The empathy engendered by Mary's version of classroom discussion permeates the children's way of being with others and colours their inter-personal relationships at class and whole-school level. Other teachers in the school, often comment on the maturity and kindness of the girls. I feel the girls learn self respect and respect for others, and learn to see me as a human being, capable of feelings, as opposed to just "a teacher."

Academically, the classroom discussion format as used by Mary, has huge benefits for the children. Their higher-order thinking skills develop steadily throughout the year, their verbal reasoning and skills sharpen, their ability to articulate ideas is honed on an ongoing basis and just as importantly, the children learn to adhere to respectful moves when in dialogue with others.

M

2<sup>nd</sup> October 2006.

B.3. Validations by critical friends in the PhD study group  
a. Emailed validation from BL

Sent: 03 March 2005 15:50  
To: Mary Roche  
Subject: RE: Influence

Hi Mary

At just a quick think I believe your work has influenced my thinking in numerous ways, some of which are;

That children no matter what age have not just the capacity to reason but to philosophise  
That they can go to many levels in their analysis  
That they are picking up information and have knowledge that we can tap into and build on rather than thinking of them as empty vessels  
That when treated as persons they respond to that way of teaching i.e.their persons and their ideas respected  
That when a teacher uses this method in the classroom that it can impact on many areas in their lives i.e. the use of language with a father hanging a shelf in the bathroom  
That it supports them to learn through questioning and the curious child is responded to rather than admonished for their curiosity  
That teachers themselves can become the pupils and learn from a child's unique perspective on things - that teacher/student relationship if reciprocal is beneficial to both  
That by treating the child as a person you are also building the self-esteem, self-worth and self-efficacy of that child  
If we have children who have the above in high quantities then that must impact on our society  
If voices are respected and heard then surely the person must feel valued - people who feel valued have more to contribute to society  
That children who can be seen as problems in other classrooms such as the child who didn't want to sing can be helped to progress their way  
  
So as we know what happens in the classroom impacts on the child which in turn can impact on the society. That a teacher in child's life is imparting more than education they are instrumental in forming their character through their experience/interaction with them.

b. Request to CMD for critique and her reply

Mary Roche Validation Document 10-04-06 (u)

How can I improve what I'm doing?

You have watched a video of my students and I carrying out a Thinking Time discussion on a specific topic (Bravery) and some classroom based discussion based on a story about the Three Bears' revenge on Goldilocks. I would be grateful for your comments and analysis.

The following questions might help as a guide for discussion:

- Is there evidence in the video that I am living to my values of allowing children to think for themselves? *Yes. Not only think for themselves but critique and justify their critique of your ideas + present ideas appropriately.*
- Did I appear to be imposing my ideas on the children? *No - you are contributing on an equal basis to the thinking conversation.*
- Did the children appear to have a democratic space in which to speak and think? *Yes. They have time and opportunity to speak, though they are part of a very large group.*
- Did the children appear to engage with each other and with the topic and enjoy the discussion? *Yes. Tipping, turn taking strategies organise democratic ways to contribute or think in silence.*
- I claim that I respect the freedom of all to think for themselves: was this reflected in my questioning style? *Yes. Definitely.*

← Amazingly well. Recalling topics + comments + responding to them after a long time lapse.

A second area of exploration involves the question:

- How might I improve my practice in relation to this aspect of my work?
- What might I change? *When you questioned a child about his comment (laughing like a girl) I think you asked him for an explanation or further comment. Pupils rarely asked each other for further explanation but mould their conversations on with their own opinions or critique. Is this a circle process only or can question-and-answer-type conversations occur - and would the be helpful or diminish the format.*

← Would you consider smaller groups eg 1/2 class doing x 1/2 class in crit. thinking (b) gradual removal of teacher in circle on occasions as pupils grow in competence in critical thinking.

(a)   
13/04/06

c. Critique from BS following request letter as per B.2

Validation Document

1. It is clear from the video that you are living to your values of allowing children to think for themselves. In fact, it could be said that each individual child is contributing to the thinking time.
2. There is no evidence to suggest that you are imposing your ideas on the children. In fact, on one occasion when you expressed an opinion and invited comment, none of the children agreed with you but continued to give their own views.
3. The children appeared to have a democratic space in which to speak and think. There was no coercion and no onus on any child to contribute to the discussion, but all seemed eager to participate and to voice their opinions.
4. The children appeared to engage with each other, sometimes agreeing, other times disagreeing with a previous speaker, which indicated that they were listening attentively to each other's contributions. On the whole, they remained on topic in their discussion on 'Bravery', occasionally referring to related issues, such as strength and toughness. All seemed to enjoy the discussion and it was obvious that they have had plenty of experience of such discussions from the manner in which they listened to each other, allowed others to speak without interruption and demonstrated respect for the rights of others.
5. Your value of respecting the freedom of all to think for themselves was reflected in your questioning style. For the most part, you allowed the discussion to flow naturally, and only interposed with a question when you felt that the discussion might be moving off topic, or to move the thinking to a higher level.
6. I do not think your practice in this area can be improved on. I had been going to suggest that perhaps you could try to cut down on the anecdotes that some children told, but I realise that that would not necessarily constitute an improvement. It could limit their freedom to participate in ways appropriate for each child.
7. Nothing needs changing. It is a very rare phenomenon to experience 30 (?) children all participating so enthusiastically in a democratic and positive process.

B. [Redacted] an  
11-4-06

d. Request to MG for critique and her reply

Mary Roche Validation Document 10-04-06

How can I improve what I'm doing?

You have watched a video of my students and I carrying out a Thinking Time discussion on a specific topic (Bravery) and some classroom based discussion based on a story about the Three Bears' revenge on Goldilocks. I would be grateful for your comments and analysis.

The following questions might help as a guide for discussion:

- Is there evidence in the video that I am living to my values of allowing children to think for themselves? *Yes - the children show that a habit or routine of expectation that they can think for themselves has already been established well.*
- Did I appear to be imposing my ideas on the children? *No - but you were engaging in a dynamic that encouraged them to stretch their thinking*
- Did the children appear to have a democratic space in which to speak and think? *Yes - they were highly respectful of our context + history and participated in a highly engaged manner. Politicians could learn a lot from them*
- Did the children appear to engage with each other and with the topic and enjoy the discussion? *Absolutely - even though it appeared to be a lengthy conversation - they were engaged focused and listening intently.*
- I claim that I respect the freedom of all to think for themselves: was this reflected in my questioning style? *I think you showed more than that - you allowed them think for themselves - you encouraged them to throw out questions to stretch + question their thinking*

A second area of exploration involves the question:

- How might I improve my practice in relation to this aspect of my work?
- What might I change?

- To really engage...
- I would wonder if the 'scream like a girl' comment was actually a sexist comment? I dunno, and was it not just adequate...  
Maybe you referring to it again might indicate that you were imposing your values [feminist, equality??] on the class?
  - I would like to see these kids in debate / argument where some would strongly disagree with others. Would they adhere to their democratic ways?
  - I would also like to see if these same qualities are exhibited in their PE, science class + in playtime? Is it influencing how these are in relation to others?
- 4/4/06 Unity

26<sup>th</sup> November 2004

Hi Mary

Following your presentation at U.L. last weekend I gained the following insights into your work.

You are developing an epistemology of practice that is based on seeing the child as a knower in the classroom. This theory of practice is different to the normative view and you are developing a form of practice that acknowledges a child's rights, one of which is to have a voice in the classroom.

You are testing your theory through your practice and gathering data from various sources such as journals, interviews, letters, videos and tapes. You have also discussed episodes from your practice as evidence of the validity of this way of working with children (Er, C, on, discussions with colleagues etc). These episodes emphasise the values of democracy, freedom, social justice that underpin your work and describe the new learning that has taken place for both you and your colleagues through exploration and reflection on practice. In our various discussions you have raised the question of the competing ideologies that are within your role, the freedom of the child versus the need for the child to learn a set curriculum, and your constant struggle to be true to both.

You are now setting out your new theory incorporating the literatures of Apple, Dewey, Donnelly, Habermas and many others. You are testing your theory through your practice and gaining new insights while deepening your self-knowledge. You are becoming more aware of the values that underpin your work and why you hold those values. You are conscious of your influence on both your pupils and colleagues. The school in which you now teach has as part of its mission statement philosophical thinking for children. You are constantly reminded how this philosophical thinking, has permeated every lesson and interaction in the classroom, you no longer see it as something that is confined to one hour a week. You speak of the enriching of the teaching experience by acknowledging the knowledge holders in the classroom as being both pupil and teacher and both have gained from the use of dialogue to learn new subjects. You speak of your own knowledge and learning being enhanced by this dialogue. You are committed to continuing development of your own learning and improvement of practice through your study.

These are the insights I have gained into your work during your presentation of work at U.L.

Regards

E

f. Emailed letter from CMD

**Sent:** 25 November 2004 21:37  
**To:** Mary Roche  
**Subject:** UL Validation

Hi Mary, I really enjoyed hearing about your work at the weekend. This is my recollection of your validation session at the weekend. You have my permission to use anything I have written here or said on your recording. Good luck with the writing, C. [redacted]

Validation Session 21 November 2004

Mary, I heard you explain how you are developing theory from your practice. The values that underpin your work came from your personal experiences of life and the education system. Your theory challenges the idea of knowledge as transmissible facts. You have come to this understanding from the contradictions of theory and practice in your classrooms. Critical thinking is the core of your work and you have critically engaged with the works of Hooks, Stowe, Kosal, Holt, Dewey and Popper.

You have contributed to new educational practice on many levels – encouraging critical thinking in both pupils and teaching colleagues. The significance of your work can be seen in how it has been readily welcomed into the professional development arena. In the democratic practices you have set in place, children's voices and silences are equally valued and thus you have changed the understanding of silence in learning.

You have contributed to new educational thinking in creating democratic processes within your practice. You have reframed practice as research. By setting the 'What Ifs' free in your classroom you have made it safe to ask 'why?' I believe that this word 'why' is the key to shifting from quality teaching to quality research. Therefore you have found key to helping practitioners to become theorists.

g. Emailed letter from BL 27 November 2004

**Sent:** 27 November 2004 11:31  
**To:** Mary Roche  
**Subject:** validation

26th November 2004

Hi Mary,  
I'm sending you my recollections of your presentation at the validation session at the weekend. Feel free to use anything that you find useful for validation purposes.  
Regards,  
B.

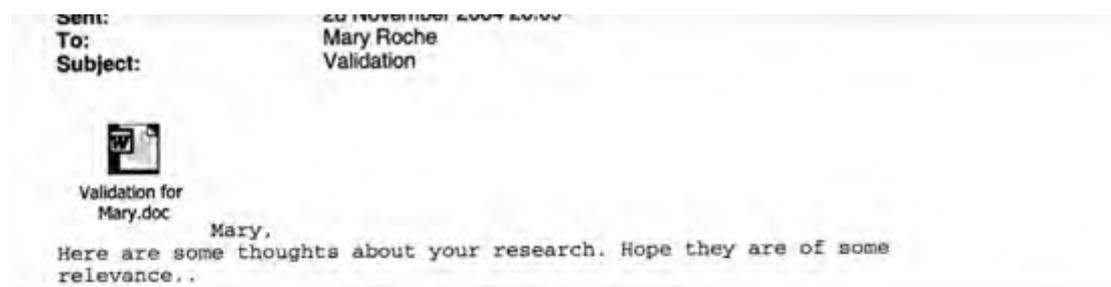
Validation session at UL 21st November 2004

Mary, you stated that you were developing a theory of practice grounded in your capacity to encourage children to think for themselves and to be critically aware. Your value of democracy allows you to perceive your pupils as having a voice and to be seen as knowers, in contrast to the traditional, transmission model that sees the teacher as the knower and the children as non-knowers. You move beyond the idea of children having a voice to the idea of children having the opportunity to express their thoughts. This may involve interrupting the curriculum, in order to provide the space for children to develop their critical thinking skills.

You demonstrate awareness of ethical issues in your practice of working with children and live out your values of freedom and democracy in recognising the child's right to choose not to speak. You work in a collaborative manner and allow the children to determine the focus and trajectory of the dialogue. This is evident in your video clips of your critical thinking sessions with your pupils.

In your practice, you have created the conditions that have helped to develop dialogical practices, which encourage children to think for themselves, and in the process you have contributed to new educational practice. You have contributed to a new form of theory by positing the idea of children as critical thinkers.

h. Emailed letter from MG 28 November 2004



I heard you speak about how your educational epistemology was formed as part of your critical pedagogy. This epistemology has evolved for you, in part, because you were educated yourself within a system of education that revered transmission models of education. Even though the 1971 curriculum promoted the child-centred approach, many behaviourist ideas lingered. Your work practices are part of your critical engagement with curriculum and perhaps the inherent injustice that is embedded in it. You talk about 'interrupting' the curriculum, which is another way of saying that you are instigating ways of thinking critically about curriculum. In new and exciting ways of working, you invite children to think for themselves. You are giving children a voice and giving them the recognition of being valid knowers. You are critiquing the notion that classrooms are democratic and you yourself hold democracy as a core value.

You are making a contribution to new and innovative educational practices and to new educational thinking. You are developing your living theory around democracy in the classroom by implementing your values around democracy in your work and by encouraging your children to voice their beliefs. You have frequently presented evidence to me to support your understanding of how you are living in the direction of your values in your practice in the your stories you have shared with me and the film clips of your thinking times.

Your theory of education, which is being formed as you are engaging in your research, is of enormous significance already because it has impacted on school policy and because your teacher meetings are incorporating your theory of democracy as a matter of course. At a wider level, you are informing the practice of other teachers by sharing you ways of working with other practitioners through summer courses and information sessions. You are also making a contribution to new theory by presenting your theory of education within the academy.

*email from M.G. 28-11-04.*

B.4. Samples evaluations by teachers attending in-service July 2003  
a. Teacher '1'

'Thinking Time' was food for thought for all of us this week. I certainly am very keen & enthusiastic about taking it on board & I will encourage others to do so. Children as critical thinkers will lead to inquiry which in turn will lead to action and will put the children themselves in the driving seat - learning about what matters to them in their lives, lives that we as teachers have very little knowledge & experience of. Thinking Time will I think lead to learning for life which is for me the essence of education & knowledge.

b. Teacher '2'

I'm definitely going to do 'Thinking Time' in my class. I've done a lot of circle time all along but now I'm going to do it in a more open-ended way. Very enjoyable course.

c. Teacher '3'

17. List any topics/subjects you would like to see being presented in other course in the future:

Follow-up to Thinking Time  
Possibly a support group coordinated  
by Mary?

18. Other comments:

Mary was a wonderful  
coordinator, who welcomed all  
contributors, positive & negative. She  
was responsible for building up  
a lovely atmosphere & sense of  
camaraderie. The pace of the  
course was relaxed & discussion  
occurred frequently.  
Thanks a million, Mary

- B.5. Sample evaluations by teachers attending workshop November 2002  
a. Teacher '1'

3. Which aspect of this workshop most appealed to you?

I liked watching the "Thinking Time" videos - as it gave an insight into how it worked.

I like allowing the teacher be at the child's level and the idea of the teacher and all pupils listening to one child and that the child isn't wrong.

4. Have you learnt anything new during this workshop which you will be putting into practice?

Yes, I'd love to use the concept in my class and I'm looking forward to seeing the results as regards teacher/pupil relationship

5. Further comments/suggestions:

Reading material provided will be of great assistance

- b. Teacher '2'

The practical experience of a 'thinking time' was helped by the videos which gave some insight into the process.

You have a lovely natural communication style - you are concerned for your subject - thinking time - the children and your audience of teachers who need your enthusiasm and support.

4. Have you learnt anything new during this workshop which you will be putting into practice?

I have a habit of searching for outcomes, "learning objectives". The process itself is the outcome - the simple act of respectful dialogue is a huge learning experience - I have learned this.

5. Further comments/suggestions:

The time frame didn't allow for more exploration of the very practical issues of the "how to". With a number of teachers present who had experience of Thinking Time it could be possible in future to divide into smaller groups and there in to identify concerns, issues

What happens if children reveal information that might highlight child abuse? What obligations has the teacher in this position?

c. Teacher '3'

3. Which aspect of this workshop most appealed to you?

The impact that thinking time has on children - how they flourish given the chance. How real children's ideas are & the different perspectives they possess.

4. Have you learnt anything new during this workshop which you will be putting into practice?

Yes, I will definitely be using this. I did learn not to give value judgements.

5. Further comments/suggestions:

Resources were excellent

d. Teacher '4'

①

3. Which aspect of this workshop most appealed to you?

The spirit of openness and willingness to participate which was evident in the group - most probably generated by the quality of the input of the speaker. ② The handouts which enable one to get a sense of the breadth and depth of children's thought - it is difficult to absorb everything within the context of the workshop itself.

4. Have you learnt anything new during this workshop which you will be putting into practice?

I was reminded of the layers which are to be excavated when children are engaged in authentic enquiry. The revised curriculum in its ideology and content ~~also~~ draws on the link between language and learning. Thinking Times seems to be ideally suited to this type of learning.

5. Further comments/suggestions:

Teachers who take their work seriously need a forum in which they can examine and reflect on their own practice. Ongoing - if only occasional - meetings like this might provide a context for meeting this need.

Well done to all. Compliments to the hotel for looking after us so well - and to the Education Centre for selecting this topic.

e. Teacher '5'

**Which aspect of this workshop most appealed to you?**  
The newness of the concept for me

**4. Have you learnt anything new during this workshop which you will be putting into practice?**  
to listen rather than dictate

f. Teacher '6'

**3. Which aspect of this workshop most appealed to you?**  
Importance of hearing what you have to say - giving them a safe forum - structure during which they can express their opinions, ideas, importance of giving you feeling that their ideas are valid, important. A process to allow them to develop

**4. Have you learnt anything new during this workshop which you will be putting into practice?**  
- Yes - lots. I'm so happy I came along. I would love to try this out in my classroom - I'm going to. I do code time regularly so class are used to this structure

**5. Further comments/suggestions:** but I'd love to try this with one class.  
their thinking skills  
↓  
questioning skills

I'd really like to attend further workshops on this area because as I implement it, I know I'll have more questions.

g. Teacher '7'

**3. Which aspect of this workshop most appealed to you?**  
All the exposure, inspiration and resources!

**4. Have you learnt anything new during this workshop which you will be putting into practice?**  
How to practically use thinking time!

**5. Further comments/suggestions:**  
I feel privileged to have been exposed to how important thinking time is in helping children to feel comfortable with themselves and value their and others individuality. It also reminds us how important our thoughts and freedom to express them are!

THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

- B.6. Evaluations of Thinking Time transcripts by parents 2002-2003  
a. Letter from CR

Bean De Roiste,

Thank you so much for the wonderful summary you gave us last week on thinking time in your class. It gave J. [redacted] and I great insight into the amazing thought process of our son and his friends. The reasoning on the way things work was just fantastic. I liked the thinking about the brain transplants!

I had to show it to my mother as she was mentioned in comments I recognised from M. [redacted]. She was so proud that her grandson spoke about her in school. It made her day.

It has inspired me to have more 'conversations' with my children on a variety of subjects that I probably wouldn't have realised they were either interested in or capable of understanding.

Education is definitely two-way process. I'm learning as well as M. [redacted] and I have to say it's a very pleasurable experience.

Thank you for sharing with us.

[redacted] Feb 26<sup>th</sup> 2004.

b. Letter from SOB

Thinking Time 6/2/04

This transcript was a delight to read. I spotted my daughter quite easily (and read with some trepidation)

Its amazing how certain "buzz" words can send them off on a tangent of thoughts and conversation.

By the sounds of things, brain transplants don't bother them too much - maybe we have some budding neurosurgeons in our midst.

An insight into the imagination of 5 & 6 year olds is eye-opening. I don't think I realised quite how much they can take in, would repeat our again using their own logic.

I look forward to some more.

S [redacted]

B.7. Evaluations by parents following viewing Thinking Time videos 2004-2005

a. Letter from SB, W's mother

30/5/06



Dear De Rafe,

Firstly thank you so much for including us parents in viewing the Thinking Time video, it was both stimulating and exciting to think our children were being exposed to such possibility of thought.

Initially, the children appeared awkward and embarrassed once the story used was finished and as time moved on, you could see their mood to become involved became more urgent. They became confident in themselves and amongst each other. They listened well and reiterated well also - not their own thoughts at first, this also became more confident with each round of the circle. You could see the layers of thought being stripped away from the very basic, down to a deeper thought process, more questioning. As one child opened one possibility of thought or aspect of the story - you could see the children diversify and the ripple effect

d. Highlights.

Interestingly with their increasing confidence, they showed the ability to disagree with each other and <sup>with</sup> you as their teacher, i.e. peers and authority figure!! Gives hope for free thinking and them not ~~being~~ conforming easily or reacting to peer pressure.

The regret as mentioned on the day of the viewing was that the children were only getting going when the discussion needed to be stopped. Who knows the possibility of where it would have led to, or whether their interest would lessen?

Overall I think the whole process is an excellent exercise, one that should be adopted by adults more freely to reduce the barriers of ~~between~~ communication and stimulate interest in what is happening around us — will help children gain responsibility for themselves and others — Great job!! Could talk forever on the subject!

b. Letter from P. L. K's father

THINKING TIME

I found the review of our children's "Thinking Time" most enjoyable and enlightening. I have been aware from the time that K & H started school in Scoil Ni that teaching methods and education in general had changed profoundly since my time in school. Perhaps the greatest noticeable change is my perception of how much the girls ENJOY going to school. While I will always have some fond memories of my childhood and primary school I don't ever really think that any child truly enjoyed going to school.

To me the greatest testament to a school and its teachers is to watch your children skip happily out the door to school, full of chatter and looking forward to their day. At schools end they rush eagerly to tell you about their day and what they had achieved.

Thinking time was, to me, a revelation into the mind of a child in today's world- free to express thoughts and full of ideas and knowledge- perhaps only a little knowledge of a great many things gleaned from TV and the information super highway, but the seeds are there. The struggle to formulate a precise opinion on the subject matter as a group until encouraged by the individual and spontaneous contribution from a child which paved the way for a further enthusiastic philosophical discussion and analysis ,

How much things have changed from the formal, shut up and listen, repeat after me process which was , as often as not , followed by corporal punishment for failure to achieve .The rigidity of my time in education in primary school, with ( again not always but...) some dour teachers and iron discipline with little or no attention to life study.

I do not mean to be overly negative in reflection on my time in school but the positive features of Thinking Time greatly impressed me .The freedom of the children to behave as individuals, as equals in a group discussion, the gradual progression to tangents from the original points. The fact that the children were free to participate in , to discuss and expound, to disagree with others ( inc. teacher) and even change their minds, was fascinating to observe. The democracy of the group discussion allowed opinions to be presented without reserve or embarrassment which could only aid the children in overcoming any shyness and reluctance to participate.

I feel that this concept should be broadly accepted in the primary educational system and form a necessary part of the curriculum.

  
P.   


c. Letter from C.H. Kn's mother

I would also like to have your permission to submit some videos with my thesis and possibly, to use them in teaching contexts at workshops and conferences. The children's identities will not be made known.

Please sign below if you wish to give your permission:

Signed [Redacted] Parent/Guardian  
Date: 1 June 2006

Le meas

Having watched the Thinking Time Video on 25/5/06 I thought it was an excellent and innovative way of teaching. I was amazed at how vocal the children were and how understanding they were of the topic. It is fantastic to see children thinking for themselves and being able to discuss their thoughts with their class and teacher in a relaxed atmosphere - even to the point where they disagreed with the teacher's thoughts!! It is great to see children thinking, giving their opinion and listening to other opinions. I felt as the video went on the children got more confident and all were eager to participate. It is a great asset to learning. If only we had had this opportunity when we were going to school!!

[Redacted]  
1<sup>st</sup> June 2006

d. Letter from M.H. AH's mother

Signed [Redacted] Parent/Guardian  
Date: 29-05-06

Thank you

Le meas *Congratulations: At last someone who thinks outside the box. Giving children the opportunity to think for themselves, to learn how to evaluate a situation and to listen to other ideas and opinions and formulate their own is wonderful.*

e. Letter from M.P. KP's mother

25-05-06

Mary,  
I enjoyed the video about "thinking time" so much today. It was wonderful to see the boys & girls talking so freely in a relaxed atmosphere. It was interesting to hear all the different opinions about the 'lists'. I found my own mind thinking about the value of making lists or not! They were so confident. Each one listened to the others' opinion. Adults, I feel could do well to have a similar session on listening in the workplace! It was good to hear the children agreeing or disagreeing with each other and giving the reasons why they did so! There were children there that I thought were shy and retiring, and I was amazed how they spoke so confidently. I would hope that this will be a regular event as it is surely doing a great deal of good for our children.

M

f. Letter from H.M. H.M.'s mother

31. May. 2006.

Henry,

Just to let you know that I enjoyed the video last week and found it most informative. H. [redacted] was quite to point out the empty chair on your first time 'round was hers! I have read the notes on the website under the 'Think Time' section but it is much easier to put the concept into context when you actually see how it is run.

One of the things that amazed me was the fact that children I would have thought of as quiet were actually well able to speak their mind. The other aspect I found interesting was that there was no "muttering" or "sniggering" when people offered ~~them~~ their views or opinions. It was very

obvious that everyone was respectful of others' opinions.

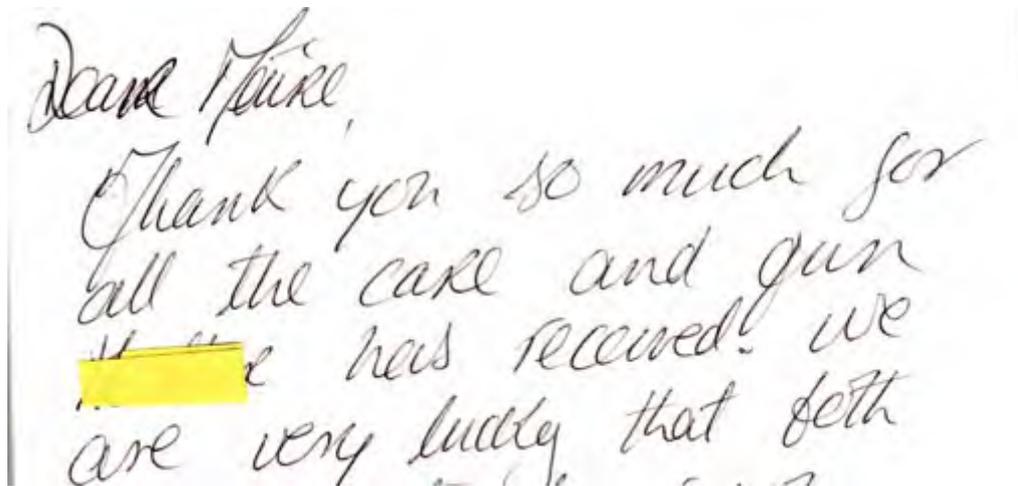
I feel showing the video to us in the presence of the children was also very beneficial. Our discussion at dinner last night was on "H. McDonalds". H. [redacted] gave us a rundown of that days Thinking Time. It's as if we know now all about it now as well and her discussion can continue at home. Maybe before this she felt we weren't aware of what Thinking Time was and she couldn't talk about it.

I would love to see more videos in time and maybe having one with parents might be looked at later.

Regards  
H. [redacted]

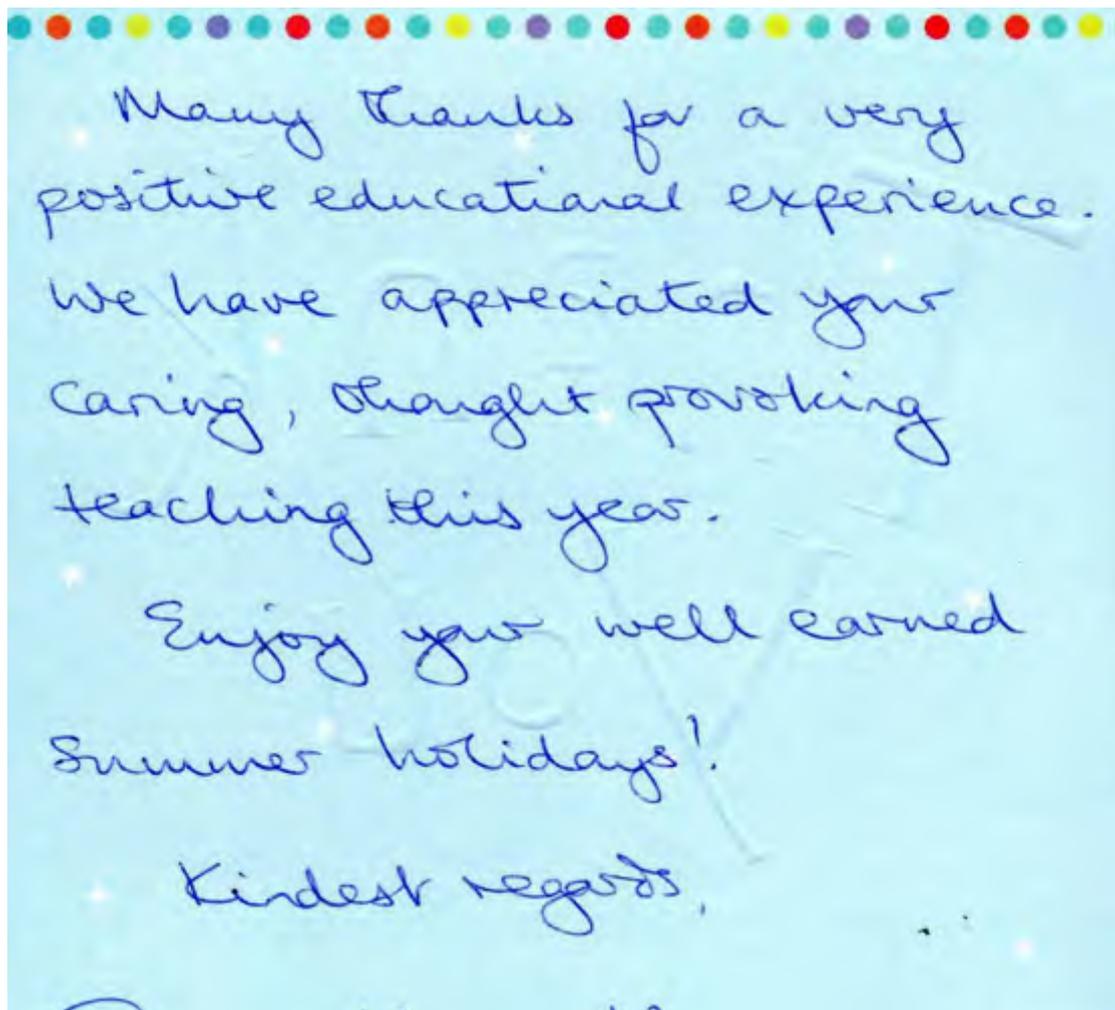
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- B.8. Samples of end of year letters  
a. Letter 'A'



Dear Mike,  
Thank you so much for  
all the care and guidance  
[redacted] has received! We  
are very lucky that both

- b. Letter 'B'



Many thanks for a very  
positive educational experience.  
We have appreciated your  
caring, thought provoking  
teaching this year.  
Enjoy your well earned  
summer holidays!  
Kindest regards,



e. Letter 'F'

Dear de Koiste,  
We would like to thank you most sincerely for making [redacted] introduction to school and the education system such a wonderful one. As you can see he loves every minute of it and is completely enthused by it which is due in no small way by the teacher he has.  
You are a lovely teacher and it is evident how kind and caring you are. Thank you again, and I hope he will continue to be so lucky all the way up which is unlikely when his initial influence was of such a high standard.

## **Appendix C Selection of transcripts referred to in thesis**

C.1. Animals in Zoos 07 March 2005

Read story of 'Zoo'. Had already read story of 'Oi! Get off our Train!'.

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- *L*: I think that actually the two books are related because they're both about cruelty to animals in a way except that in the Zoo book the Zoo is trying to protect the animals and zoos are not really bad. They don't try to do actually harm to the animals ... I mean, they try to keep them from getting extinct.
- *P*: I think they're related, both stories. They both try to explain to some people that animals are not actually safe at all. They're not safe in zoos. They're protected but that's not the same as saying they're safe. People don't treat them well. In the wild, animals have everything they need to live. But when they're in captivity, they can't get what they need because they can't make themselves understood to humans. Humans can't understand what animals really need. Even parrots that are trained to talk can't tell people what they need. The only way that animals would be really safe and protected is if humans became extinct.
- *K*: I didn't find them related at first. I found that they both are trying to mention how mean and cruel people are being. Maybe the authors are trying to get us to think so that when we grow up we can stop what greedy people do to animals and we might try to make people find other ways to get keys for their pianos and fur for their fur coats.
- *M*: I thought, while I was listening to that story and looking at the pictures, that in zoos it seems kind of cruel to animals that people are always looking at them and mocking them.
- *O*: D'you know the person who wrote those books? Well I think they're trying to tell us that all the animals that are in the world are in danger from people. Its people mostly that are killing them. People don't have to use animals like that.
- *C*: Like P said: if people didn't exist, some animals would be safe. There are other natural enemies and dangers for animals like poison, plants, bigger animals that prey on them and getting sick, but P is right: people are the worst enemy.
- *Cn*: We could try to keep animals as pets to mind them but they are even safe in our houses either because they can run out and get killed on the road or they can die from eating too much food. They can be abandoned and left to die on the side of the road when people get tired of them ... like snakes and things.
- *W*: I kind of agree with L. Zoos are not just there for protection of animals from extinction. They're also there for people, because people enjoy looking at the animals.
- *D*: Those two people wrote those books to tell us that animals aren't safe anywhere. Not even like Cn said in our houses. They can escape. My friend's snake escaped and they can't find him and they think he's up in the attic eating mice.
- *Ch*: I think it's better ... like P said. If there's no human being around ....animals would be safe from human beings who love killing animals. We need animals but animals need us to love them not kill them.
- *Kn*: I seriously agree with P. He *is* right. If we were extinct they'd be able to live. The zoo is not really for looking after animals. If they were free to do whatever they wanted that would be different but they're not. We're just using them....like objects.
- *D*: I agree with Kn and with P. If we were extinct we couldn't cause any further harm to animals ... but I wonder what would happen then?
- *Hi*: Well I don't agree with the idea of zoos like the one in that book. I don't think its right to have animals in zoos like that. In Africa we had places for keeping animals but they were big parks; animals could roam around free and you had to go looking

- for them because the parks are huge. There aren't any cages and the animals just carry on doing what they normally do.
- *Jr*: I agree with P: animals aren't very safe in our care. Once I was cleaning out my fish's bowl and changing his water and he jumped out of the bowl and I wonder if he was trying to escape back to where he came from.
  - *Sa*: In response to my question: 'which do you think, Sa: would animals like to be running free or in the zoo?' Sa answered "they should be out running free". 'Why?' "Because they'd be happier."
  - *Cr*: I agree with Hi: Wild life preserves are better than zoos. In the wild life preserve, the animals can not only do whatever they want, and humans won't destroy them, but also if one of them gets sick there's a vet or a team of animal doctors to look after them. Also they're kind of guarded so that animal trappers, who would try to steal them, can't get away with it because the wild life rangers are watching all the time. People try to steal animals for their fur or their teeth and you can get up to \$5000 for them. Bad people take them and kill them and stuff them and paint them. And that's wrong. They should be left alone.
  - *A*: I say animals like to be free. They don't like to be in the zoo or the circus. If I am an animal I don't like to be in a zoo.
  - *Me*: Do you think that they do not like the circus either?
  - *A*: Of course not. Its bad for them
  - *Me*: Do you like to go to the circus?
  - *A, smiling*: well yes....
  - *Ce H*: I think animals shouldn't be in zoos because it's not fair. Humans wouldn't like being in zoos so why do they expect animals to like it?
  - *Kn*: I agree with Mo. Animals shouldn't have to be in cages because its like they're on display and they probably hate all those people looking at them all the time.
  - *T*: I agree with L a little bit and I disagree with him a little bit and I agree and disagree with P too. Sometimes maybe zoos could be good. They can help some animals to be safe. Like if there were little bunnies in the jungle tigers would eat them. Zoos could help them get away from that kind of danger. But I also think that it's good to be out running free. I agree with P too, that people are the worst enemies of some animals but I disagree with him because they're also the best friends of other animals.
  - *Dn*: I disagree with P, Kn and D and I agree with T. If there were no people there would be no food for some pets. Who would look after the dogs and the little puppies?
  - *Ce*: I actually changed my mind about what I said before. Now I think that animals should be free...well not the dangerous ones, only the nice ones.
  - *Jr*: I think most animals would like to be free if we gave them a choice. When I look out my back window I can see rabbits and birds. I bet they would rather take their chances out there than be safe in a cage.
  - *Hi*: I don't think that people actually understood me properly. I wasn't saying that in Africa they capture animals and put them in the wild life parks: The animals that are there already lived there...only animals from Zimbabwe live in the wild life parks in Zimbabwe.
  - *Me*: Oh, so it's not like Fota where there are giraffes and we all know that Cork has no native giraffe population!
  - *Hi*: Yes. They're all native animals.
  - *Ó*: I disagree with Ce. She said that the good animals should go free and the bad animals should stay in the cages. I think that's a bit harsh because no animal wants to feel that they're not free. And who decides what good is or what bad is?
  - *K*: I have two reasons and they're both completely different. One is if animals were extinct then we couldn't hurt them. The other is that I disagree with Ó that bad animals aren't really bad but some of them can look scary but it might just be the way they look.

## C.2. Animal Rights 27 February 2006

- *AH*: Yes, animals should have rights because some animals are in circuses and they're kind of lucky because they have fun and they jump through rings but in Zoos they could be in cages for all of their lives.
- *Me*: should all animals have rights? Should they all have the same rights? For example would you think that a rat and a Labrador guide dog deserve the same rights?
- *AH*: well the guide dog is doing a job and he's useful so I'd put him in a different group to the rat cos they are just troublesome and if you get a bite of a woman rat I mean a lady rat you can die.
- *De*: I think all animals should have the same rights. Like if you put kids into cages and then you said to half of them 'ye can go out and be free and the rest of ye have to stay' that wouldn't be fair. So it's not fair either for animals.
- *Cn*: Zoos and circuses are kind of good for animals, they get exercise and have fun and get good food. Wild animals get killed.
- *Hb*: Every animal ought to have the right to have freedom. Like if a zebra is captured and put into a zoo and if her baby is born in the zoo, then that baby won't ever be able to leave because he wouldn't know what to do in the jungle. He'd find it scary and he wouldn't probably survive very long.
- *Am*: I think all animals should have the right to freedom, like us. They shouldn't have to stay in their cages for their whole lives. At least we get left out free at 18.
- *Me*: Should all captive animals be given the chance of freedom, all cows, chickens, pigs?
- *Am*: Yes
- *D*: I think some animals might like being in a zoo and some might hate it but say if the animal is endangered like the polar bear in that story...well if they met someone who would hurt them and then if they got the choice to live in a safe zoo, you'd find that they'd probably pick the zoo. Then some animals would rather have the chance to be wild. I've been to America and we went to a place called Sea World and they have those dangerous electric eels there but they coat them in oil so that they're not stinging and you can pet them and I think that's wrong. I think it's really cruel to put oil on them. And about the cows and chickens, well there are so many of them because they have vets to look after them if they sick whereas wild animals just die more often because they have no chance to get a vet.
- *Ds*: If we gave all of them freedom it could be bad, cows could be getting into fights all over the place.
- *Se*: I disagree with Cn: no way should animals be in circuses or zoos. Some animals are very dangerous and they have to be trained but say they got angry or fed up and decided to attack that would be natural for them but what do you think would happen? They'd get whipped to make them behave. Why should we whip animals just for doing what they're naturally inclined to do? Why should they be in cages to amuse people and do tricks? We judge some animals by their appearance and say 'oh that's only a rat or that's only a snake; they're bad' But that's like judging a book by its cover. In a contest between a worm and a bunny, people look at the bunny and see cute and cuddly so they give more rights to the bunny. That is not fair on the worm. Or they say another animal is dangerous and he shouldn't have rights so they kill it.
- *Me*: I agree with Se – all animals should have the right to live. Just because a lion is dangerous to humans doesn't mean we should kill it. If a person is training animals and the animal doesn't do what the person says then he shouldn't be allowed to whip the animal for not doing the tricks and what the human says. They use electric things and hurt them for not doing the tricks. That's not right! What did the animals ever do to us?
- *Me*: But if your Mum and Dad and you went to the circus and paid 5 euro each and then the animals just sat there doing nothing you'd feel swindled, wouldn't you? So maybe the circus trainers have to resort to using electric shocks and whips to make them do their tricks for you?

- *Me*: well, maybe we would... but I don't still think that it's right to beat them and hurt them to make them do their tricks.
- *Ag*: I agree with *Se*. All animals should have the right to do what they want. They shouldn't be shocked: they should all run away or break out. It's not fair to them that we have the right to hurt them but they don't have the right to hurt us back. Circus animals are easily hurt and I think its abuse of animals to make them stay in cages and go in lorries all over the world.
- *Me*: There's something I want to ask, do you think that we humans make a kind of distinction between the animal that we like and the ones we don't, and that we kind of give more rights to those we like?
- *Sh*: I've been thinking about rights and I don't think that every single animal should have rights. Like some should have rights OK. But not rats, snakes, crocodiles, alligators, maybe wasps. So if you made a line you could put all them on one side, because they have sharp teeth and they can bite you. Then on the other side you could put lions and tigers and cows and dogs and cats and rabbits and bears. They should have rights. They're the good animals.
- *Me*: but don't they have sharp teeth too? Couldn't some of them kill you too?
- *Sh*: well some of them are different though.
- *Srb*: I disagree with *Sh* – you can't have a 'bad side' and a 'good side' for animals. Who would decide? You can't decide to kill some because they're less cute and allow some to live because they more cuddly. Anyway some people have snakes for pets and they probably think they are cuddly.
- *Ax*: I think every animal should have rights. If you put a puppy in a stable he'd be delighted but if you put a horse in a kennel he'd be miserable. Animals are in a hierarchy except not for reasons you think. Dogs and cats can go in a garden but not horses; they destroy it but not on purpose. They have a hierarchy and they all belong in a certain place.
- *Ey*: I sort of disagree with *Sh*: If you had all the cute and cuddly on one side and all the rats on the other and if you killed all the rats then they'd be extinct and then cats and foxes that eat rats would die and soon all the cuddly side would die because they're all linked together and depend on each other in a way.
- *AD*: I would give every cuddly animal more rights
- *Ke*: I think it's cruel to put animals in cages. They could be in there for ages and then they might get angry and want freedom and they might bite someone
- *En*: I agree with *D* that some animals should be in a zoo because they are endangered.
- *Pr*: I think we should all be vegetarians, that way we wouldn't be killing animals.
- *AC*: I was wondering if there was a bird in the zoo and it was the last one left on Earth, and if there was loads of monkeys would we treat the bird better than the monkeys.
- *MMc*: Well...I was thinking about fish, I don't think they feel any feelings. After they lay eggs thousands and thousands and they don't wait to see if they live or die and sometimes people catch them but there are loads left. So I don't think they could have any feelings about so many eggs.
- *Ay*: I was thinking that if a bunny was dangerous and could bite and if an alligator was cute and cuddly we would treat the alligator nicer than the bunny. We treat animals differently according to how we feel about them.
- *B*: I disagree with *Sh* because we should not have a hierarchy of animals none is more important than the other. And I disagree with *MMc* I think fish have feelings but no voices. And I agree with *Pr* that we should be vegetarians but it is really hard to be one. I'll tell you a funny story my Mum told me about when she was small on my Grandad's farm. She got to look after the new born lambs sometimes if their moms had died and she kept them alive and gave them names but she was saving up for a saddle for her pony and she kept asking Granddad when could she kill the lambs and sell them.
- *D*: I actually really do think that we do the line thing with good animals on one side and bad ones on the other. There's no such thing as bad animals really, but we see it like that.

C.3. Anne Frank's story 06 February 2006

**A:** I think it was very cruel what they did. If someone was treating a child badly on the street just because the child was a Jew and if people were afraid to help the child because they'd get beaten too... that is awful... I think the people should have still interfered, they are adults, they've had a chance to grow up...the child hadn't, so they should have tried to stop the soldiers even though they might get killed themselves.

**Sh:** It's not fair: it's cruel. People should not do things like that to 9 and 10 year old children, make them hide in a room like that with no fresh air. When I was in France on holidays we went to a place and there was still blood on the walls since the war.

**Ey:** Say if a child grew up in a country like that, it would be awful; no one could have an opinion or anything.

**A:** I agree with Ey. It is very important for people to have their opinions. That's the only way to get rid of guys like Hitler, all the other countries should have joined up and helped....who was he fighting? Anne and her family were Germans....was he fighting his own country, I don't get it...

**H:** I was thinking there could be war here, loads of wars start with the tiniest thing. Anything can lead to hatred and hatred leads to war. People make comments about other people and calling them names leads to hatred.

**Mn:** The people who helped the soldiers do bad things to Anne's family were just as bad as Hitler. I don't know how Anne must have felt when her friends started calling her names and saying they wouldn't play with her because she was Jewish, it must have been really sad and miserable for her.

**Ay:** I was wondering....was Hitler a very stupid man? Cos you said in the story that Germany was losing the war, so why was he killing so many of his own people? What's the point of killing all the Jewish people and the gypsies and all the others? He needs his own people! They might not all be on his side now, in that war, but maybe in the next war they might.

**Mre:** You know the way...?...I agree with Mn...I wonder how Anne felt when all the people started talking about her.

**Se:** I was thinking that it takes very little to start a war. Remember a while back we were talking about stereotyping? Well I'd say wars can start from stereotyping people, because that can lead to hatred and hatred can lead to war. It's like judging a book by its cover and not looking inside....some people think all Irish people are lazy and drunk and always fighting, and we know they're not...people get a bad name...like if our Junior Infants were out somewhere and they were messing and they had their uniform on and then people might say...'oh, that's Scoil N, that's a very bad school'...well they shouldn't: They should check it out for themselves. Hitler persuaded all the people to go against the Jews. The people should have asked, 'where's the proof that the Jews are all bad'?

**Sh:** I agree with Ay. I think Hitler was very stupid.

**B:** People should have stood up to him. He was just a bully. Bullies always act tough but they're not so tough if you stand up to them

**AB:** I agree with Se and Ay. On one hand, like Ay said he was stupid to kill so many of his own people, that was a big mistake....maybe some of those people would have been on his side...and I agree with Se that the people were stupid to believe him without proof.

**Mn:** I agree with Ay as well...Hitler was very stupid...what's the point of killing people over them being the wrong colour or the wrong religion?...people are people...what's the point?

**A H:** I don't know why either.

**Cr:** I think Se is right about stereotypes...but how come people who are stereotyped don't stereotype back?

**Ds:** But when they were hiding up in the attic, it was other Germans betrayed them...why?

**L:** I've been thinking about Anne in school when the other kids turned against her. They probably heard their Mums and Dads talking about the Jewish people in a bad way and the parents gave bad example to them and that's why they did it to her.

**Ke:** I was thinking why Anne Frank's family went to Amsterdam...why didn't they go to Brazil or somewhere but I suppose the Germans would go there then.

**AD:** I agree with Ke...it would just have spread the war to Brazil.

**En:** Anne Frank had a very cruel life. Even before she had to hide in the attic, she was sad in school. She was real popular and then they all went against her and that must have been ...not good and....then her whole life changed.

**Dn:** The Germans were already losing the war when the Americans joined in.

**V:** I was wondering, right? Say now she was one year old and people were going against the Jews...would they have hurt her even though she was only one? Would no one have said 'Stop'?

**A C:** I don't think anyone ever has a perfect life. Bits of it might be good but nearly everyone has some trouble. I don't know why some people have really bad ones but I think everyone has some bad stuff.

**Ag:** How come the helper...Miep? How come she didn't get caught?

**AHy:** Could a war start here? Like with the IRA or something?

**Ae:** You know Ag's question? Maybe the helper hid too somewhere?

**B:** I was thinking....well ....the way we all think can't be forced on us...like we might think its right to be Catholics, but we couldn't make someone **be** a Catholic, we could bring them to the church but we couldn't force them to believe. You have to **be** one to really believe... and you can't make anyone else **be** one unless ...they ...em...*believe* ...em ... in it...for themselves.

C.4. Dear Greenpeace (with Senior Infants) 06 February 2004

*The story 'Dear Greenpeace' (James 1991) is about a little girl called Emily who writes to Greenpeace telling them about the blue whale called Arthur who has come to live in her garden pond. (Er's contributions marked with \*\*\*)*

**Me:** What about that story? Who'd like to start?

**Ie:** In Spain, I have a friend called Emily the same as the girl in the story.

**Ia:** Pets kind of need to go to the vet to get injections in their bottoms.

**Cn:** (not in turn) yeah that's so they can't get babies.

**Sh:** I wonder why they don't want pets to have babies. Baby animals are sooo cute!

**D:** My granny's dog loves me so much when I do this (he nuzzles his shoulder with his nose) he does it back to me.

**JM** I liked that story because Arthur returned to Emily.

**E:** One day when my brother was walking my dog M, she got knocked down and the people in the car could not open the door to see if she was OK because her head was in the way, blocking the door so they followed them home. M had to go into the hospital and get stitches. She's alright now, she's fine again.

**M:** (new child in class, started yesterday): Well! In my old school my friend A had a pet lizard. His name was Spike. He was called Spike because he had spikes all over his head and his back. He was so cool. He could do this ... (flicks his tongue in and out).

**F:** Because there are really such things as whales I liked the story, but they are far too big to live in a pond. That's a bit ridiculous.

**S:** I got a dog called M and he always jumps on my back and I have to walk with him on my back.

**Ce:** My goldfish is getting bigger because I feed him every day. But I'm a bit worried because his goldy bits are going white.

**K:** I have 2 fish, and a cat and when I was nearly asleep she jumped up and put her head in the fishes bowl and she hurt my feelings because I thought she was going to kill them but I woke up and scared her away.

**H:** My cousin's cat Snowy died and they got a new one called Salem but then he had to be sold away and she got two new ones and one died.

**M:** I like whales very much. I like the water coming out of them. I would not be scared of them. They eat fish – not people. Sharks are scary. They can eat you.

**Eo:** I have two cats, one dog called Max...I mean two fish. My cat tried to eat the fish and once ...because we left the door open for the dog and he made a plan to catch the cat. Once a long time ago the dog saw the cat trying to eat the fish and he tried to stop him and got himself hurt. My dog loves to make plans and stuff.

**Ca:** I have two goldfish and when I got them the next day one died and the next day after that the other one died and then my bird died.

**Me:** Oh dear. Were you sad?

**Ca:** I was crying for my bird but not for my fish, because they're just fish. I loved the bird more than the fish.

**E:** My nana has a dog: the first time I call him he doesn't come and the second time he does.

**Mh:** My nana has about 9 or 10 cats in her back garden. Some of them are not hers but they like to come for a visit. Well...there is one that is black and white, one that is grey and one is all black. When my Auntie puts out food the grey one comes first and then the black and white cat chases him away and takes the food.

**Sh:** (inaudible at beginning)...my Mum had to sleep with my Auntie last night because she's getting a baby and they heard lots of noises outside the window. They couldn't get to sleep because of all the yowling and screaming and fighting. My auntie thought they were children – she really did! She said to my Mum 'what time is it?' and 'what are they doing out so late?' Because it was after 10 o'clock and they kept it up and up and they were on top of each other's backs and it was so noisy. And my Mum said to my auntie 'for goodness sake its only

cats not children; they'll soon go to sleep, ignore them' but they kept on getting up on each others' backs and they were sounding so like children crying and fighting that my auntie and my mum made a cup of tea and my mum opened the back door and said 'scram' to them.

**\*\*\*Er:** My dog is called M. he caught a mouse yesterday in my house and he put it in his basket and L took it out.

**Sh:** (interrupts) Who is L?

**\*\*\*Er:** my Mum, that's her name.

**Cl:** my goldfish died a long time ago and when I woke up and I looked in the kitchen and saw him dead I did not feel good.

**J:** One day in B\_\_\_\_\_n there was a ct looking at my dog B when my brother P took him for a walk, the cat scrawled his nose for no reason and it was all bleeding. P came home and said to my dad 'look his nose is all bleeding' but my dad said 'he'll lick it and it will be fine in a day or two' and I said 'can I look?' and I saw it and it was all bleeding.

*Several more stories about individual pets...*

**Ao:** I saw dolphins once – they were playing in the water. I know they were playing because they looked happy and they were smiling big big smiley smiles.

**Me:** *I'd like to go back to something that Eo said about his dog making plans. I think that's very interesting. Can dogs think and make plans, I wonder?*

**Ie:** No! I don't think they can think. They don't have a brain or anything like people.

**Sh:** I think they can. Well actually its very interesting because I can talk to them see I have a book and I learned the language. And you would not understand it. You wouldn't know what I am saying but dogs do and that is how I know that dogs can think. I'd need my book here to tell you so I can't say the real words but it sounds louder than a killer whale's splash, their language.

**Me:** *(to class) That's very interesting. What do you think dogs think about?*

**Mh:** Well they like bones and walks and people to throw sticks and say 'fetch' so maybe they think about that.

**Ie:** they might be thinking about loving their family and stuff like that.

**Ia:** I think they probably think about people and wonder what they're saying to them.

**Sh:** They can think about most things like we do but in a slightly different way. We think in mostly talk but they have a lot of ...kind of ...pictures ...like cartoons in their heads. Well that's what my dog has.

**Cl:** I disagree! Dogs don't think, Sh. You need a real language to think. Words. Real words.

**Ia:** I think a mouse probably thinks about going round and round and getting some cheese.

**K:** Goldfish do not think. My sister's friend E's goldfish didn't die and it got put down the loo for biting her other fish and they wouldn't do that if it could think about what was going on.

**J:** What about horses? Do they think? What would they be thinking?

**Sh:** (jumping up): They can think actually but I cannot talk to them. They have their own language: horses talk to horses and dogs talk doggish ....to other dogs.

**Me:** *I'm interested in what Ca said. She said you need a language to think. What about babies? Can they think?*

**Mn:** well, no. I don't think babies can think. My sister H cannot think, cos she cannot talk. When they grow bigger they learn the names for stuff and they learn to talk and then they can think.

**Sh:** I disagree with Mn. My baby sister can think very well. Look at all the stuff she can do. She can cry when she wants my Mum to come, she can laugh when things are funny, she can point to things when you ask her where's the light? Or where's the door or the window? That means she's remembering and you need thinking for remembering. Actually I was just thinking that if you get a brain transplant you would be the same but you would know what the other person knew because you would have their thoughts for while. Like if Er got Ce's brain he would know what Ce knows even though he would still be Er.

**JM:** Are you sure?

**Sh:** Of course! He would not know who he was but he would know lots of things because Ce knows a lot of things.

**Me:** *That's quite fascinating. How do we know who we are?*

**S:** My brain makes me who I am

**F:** My brain tells me in my mind who you are and who I am.

**Mh:** It's your ears as well. When someone calls your name your ears hear it and your brain knows that it's your name.

**Sh:** No no! I disagree!. In the brain ...your head is a boney shape. In there is your brain and in there is your mind as well.

**D:** I agree but I don't know why.

**H:** If you're dead, your body goes in the earth and you might go to hell and be a devil, and if you go to heaven you are an angel and your spirit comes out of your body and when a baby comes out of someone you go into a different skin.

**E:** Do you know when we were talking about brains and minds – they're not different things, people just call them different names.

**J:** What H said is right. If your skin is red you are a devil and if your skin is white you are an angel. Baddies have red skin, goodies have white skin

**Me:** *If you're a child who has brown skin and you're good what colour would you be?*

**J:** You'd still be white so long as you're a goodie.

**K:** when you go to sleep your brain keeps on thinking. Your brain doesn't go to sleep

**\*\*\*Er:** No it's not asleep. I agree with K. I think your brain thinks about dreams. Dreams are not real. They come out of your thoughts in your brain.

**Mh:** You go to sleep and your brain never goes to sleep. Your brain dreams and you dream.

**Ie:** Sometimes I get different dreams. People get different dreams at different ages.

**Sh:** Er with Cl's brain would get Cl's dreams

**Eo:** Er would forget some of his dreams, Sh. It would be like him starting up his own dreams again, age one, two, three, four...

**Sh:** You're right Eo! We all have different dreams and like Er said your brain never sleeps.

**\*\*\*Er:** your brain tells you your skin is itchy and you scratch it in your sleep and your brain tells you to turn and you turn even though you're asleep

**Sh:** well maybe then your skin is never asleep. Maybe its your skin that's doing that thinking...

**K:** remember what J was saying about spirits? I saw the Haunted Mansion on the telly and there was a spirit living there and the family saw the spirit.

**Mh:** You know about the brain given to Er? Well, Er would have his dreams but he might have Cl's dreams as well. He might have double dreams.

**Sh:** You do not give away your thoughts with your brain. You still have them even when you are dead. But if you were giving away the brain the brain would have thoughts that were alive and they would know that the brain was being given away.

**C:** I saw an ad on the telly and they had a brain and it was cut open and there was nothing inside only a whole mess of blood and stuff. There wasn't a mind in there.

**Sh:** Yeah, actually, (sighs) I saw that ad as well and I didn't see any thoughts inside either.

**Cn:** Know what? Mouses are very clever. They can think a lot. They can get everywhere they want. They make holes: they can think.

**Ie:** I always wanted a pet. Mum always says 'ask your dad' but he's always away in \_ making lots and lots of money so we can live a nice life.

**F:** We're not rich at all. Our house is full of church mice. They're everywhere.

**Ca:** I forgot to tell you about the two fish in S\_\_\_\_\_ playschool. We had a walk one day over to the pet shop and we saw a fish with his brains on his head – outside.

**S:** I saw a little shark in the garden centre pet shop. You'd have to be careful what you put into the tank with that.

**K:** I saw a big shark on the news paper.

**Ao:** I like thinking about thinking. It makes your head feel funny.

**Ia:** There's a pet shop in town and the tanks are filthy. My mum said its cruel to the fish.

**S:** I know that one. I saw rabbits in there and there was a bad smell.....(*several pet shop anecdotes follow*)

C.5. Rainbows and Reality 27 February 2004

*(Observers: YO'F - classroom assistant (also transcribing) and AT - Spanish teacher)*

**Ea:** Well, a rainbow is ... well ... since the rain is very dark sometimes – the sky is very dark and God decides after a whole lot of bad weather that the sun will come out and make lots of colours.

**Ag:** First there's some heavy rain and then the sun comes out and that makes a rainbow

**Cl:** I agree with Ag and Ea because I think too that the rainbow comes from the sun and the rain together

**Mn:** The rain makes the rainbow. It always comes after the rain

**S:** The rainbow comes cos the sun has to dry up all the water

**Ao:** I know the all of ... most of the colours of the rainbow. There's purple, blue, yellow, green, red, violet and em ... I forget the rest

**H:** I agree with Ag, Ea and S – a rainbow is from sun and rain

**Ia:** I agree with Ao because I like the rainbows ... all the colours of them

**Ce:** On the rainbow, some of the rain comes into the sparkly stuff and when it goes in, then it comes back out sparkling and that's how rainbows always become bright

**Sh:** Well actually, it really comes from God. God knows that bright colours are nice to look at. It makes the world look nice and that's why he does it. It makes us cheer up after the dark, dark sky of the rain

**Ca:** First it rains, and then it's sunny and then a rainbow comes out

**Cn:** When it's really, really sunny after rain a rainbow comes

**F:** God gives gold and then gold gives a rainbow

**Eo:** When a rainbow is there it's not really there. It's just the sun reflecting the colours of the rain

**Ie:** I agree with Ao and Ea

*Teacher: Why?*

**Ia:** because I think they're very, very good questions

**Ce:** I think the sun is blocking the rainbows sometimes ... cos you can't really see it during the day because its out in space and the sun sometimes moves and then it comes out

**D:** I agree with F – he said the rainbow comes from gold

**Mh:** I think that when it rains and then the rain stops, then all the water evaporates into the clouds and then its stays up there and then it comes back down as rain. Then the rainbow comes into the sky ... its made up out of a bendy thing and the sun shines on it and makes it into all colours.

*Teacher: has anybody got any questions about rainbows?*

**AT:** Yes, me. I have a question. I want to know can you touch a rainbow.

**F:** You can't touch it because it's up in the sky

**Ie:** But if you were up in the sky **then** you could touch it

**H:** It's not real ... I think it's not real

**Sh:** It **is** real! You can **see** it!

**Eo:** No it's not real because you couldn't touch it – you'd burn yourself! But it is real because you see it

**Sh:** Yes, you're right, cos the rainbow is really hot. The sun is behind it like Ce said – and the rainbow blocks the sun – it's a circle really and it's up at the same height as the sun

**Cn:** In a forest somewhere there's a pot of gold and the rainbow comes out of it and shines up

**Ea:** I'm answering your questions about how do rainbows get made first ... well it takes very heavy rain and very bright sunshine together and very bright colours to make a rainbow. It comes after dark colours and it's very, very bright

**Sh:** Yes well ... but it **is real** though. You **can** touch it but you shouldn't cos it might burn you or it might break.

*Teacher: I'm interested in that word 'real' ... what do you mean when you say that something is real. So think about that for a while but first perhaps you could tell me if you have any ideas about why a rainbow is bent ... why isn't it a straight line, d'you think?*

**Ea:** I think how the rainbow gets bent is cos it used to be a circle – a very coloured circle ... but bits got way too hot and way too old and those bits they broke off and went rotten

**Mh:** Do you know if it didn't bend? Well it would try to land somewhere but it couldn't ever, ever land – cos it would be straight – so it would go on and on at both sides out into space, out apast space out past that place and the next place and the next place and out of the universe

**Sh:** Yeah and then if you were climbing on it you would go out, out, out of the earth and space and darkness and there wouldn't be an end and it would go out and out and out and never end ever and if you were climbing on it you'd never get down unless you got some kind of a slide in space to slide back down to earth

**Mh:** You can't climb on rainbows Sh...they're not real ... I mean they're not things you can climb on

**H:** I think rainbows come down from the sun when it shines and makes it hot after a rain shower.

*Teacher: I see that there are lots of people with their hands up who want to talk, so we will break into small groups for a while and talk in the small groups and then come back into the circle again after about ten minutes. Is that OK? Group indicates agreement.*

[Class breaks into small groups. Teacher walks about and listens, Circle reconvenes after a short 'chatting' time]

**AT** (Spanish Teacher): I have asked Sh this question: is there only one rainbow and if you see that rainbow here, will my parents who are in Spain also see the same rainbow?

**Sh:** Yes that's right and I said you'd see it if you are in the middle. But there's loads and loads of middles – everywhere has a middle and if you are facing to this side you see this bit and if you are facing to that side you see that bit and if you are at the back you only see the back of it and if you are at the front you see the front. But if you are in the middle you see the whole lot of the rainbow but because the earth is turning all the time then there are loads and loads of middles.

**Jk:** you know the way that Sh said that rainbows are in the middle of space. Well see the world goes round, its not the rainbow that goes round ... the world is moving all the time and it only looks as if the rainbow is moving.

**Ce:** Maybe when the world goes around and if the rainbow comes out when it's passing a country then that country sees it.

**Sh:** You see ... I **didn't** say the rainbow is in the middle of the **earth or in the middle of space**. I said the earth is down here and space is up there and the rainbow is in the middle, in between, and so you will always see the rainbow no matter where you are on the earth because there's loads of middle. The middle is always changing, there's always a different middle because the earth is **real** and it's moving but space isn't.

**Mh:** You know Sh, when you say there's only one rainbow ... I would disagree with you there, because each time there's a brand new rainbow.

**Sh:** Well **Mister!** I meant if the sun was finished with it and they had enough of it they would break it up and make a new one then

*Teacher: Sh .... perhaps you could reply to Mh without saying Mister – I think we agreed already as a group about things like this. It doesn't sound respectful or nice – OK?*

**Sh:** What? Oh ... yes ... OK ... sorry Mh

*Teacher: you said 'they' a minute ago – that 'they' would break it up ... who are 'they'?*

**Sh:** The sun and God – they're the ones that can make a rainbow

**Mh:** yes but Sh, the sun is not a person!

**Eo:** And I disagree with Sh and Ea about a rainbow breaking. I mean where would all the cracked pieces of a broken rainbow go? **I've** never seen them. Where would they go? I have never seen a rainbow die – ever!

**Sh:** I didn't say it would die ... it doesn't die – just break up – maybe the pieces are sharp enough to go in the earth!

**Mh:** Teacher ... you know when Sh said that the sun and God make rainbows? Well I think that yes, God makes rainbows ... cos the sun, Sh – it isn't **alive**. If the sun was alive, Sh ... you know ... it would be spinning and the earth would be spinning and....

*Teacher: and what might happen in that case?*

**Mh:** Nothing ... cos it couldn't happen ... cos the sun isn't **alive**!

**Cl:** You know you were asking about the bend in the rainbow? Well maybe it isn't bent ... maybe it just comes out like that. It sort of comes over like that and like that (motions an arc with his arms)

*Teacher: we've certainly heard a lot of really interesting stuff about rainbows today. Now has anybody got any way of explaining what 'real' means? Lots of people have been trying to answer that question for thousands of years. We heard a lot of talk earlier about whether a rainbow was 'real' or not. What does 'real' mean?*

**Cn:** In a forest there's a real pot of gold and far away in another forest there's another real pot of gold and it ... the rainbow reflects from them to each other.

**Mh:** When you see a person doing something in real life ... that's real. Apples are real, trees are real lots of things in school are real

**Ea:** Real means that something is there and you're not joking and you make sure you're not sleeping and you're really awake. A house is real. I know that this school is real because if not then everyone wouldn't be here. You wouldn't be here and we wouldn't be able to hear each other and see each other and touch each other

*Teacher: That's really interesting – that you mentioned sleep, because I was just going to ask you how do you know that we are all really here. How can I know that I'm not just having a dream and you're all in it?*

**Eo:** Because simple! If you were dreaming Teacher, then surely sometime you would have to wake up and if you were just dreaming us up then you wouldn't **know** any of us when you wake up

**Ea:** yes and you wouldn't be able to hear us and we wouldn't be able to hear you and we wouldn't be able to answer any of your questions!

**Eo:** Yeah! That's a really, really good idea Ea!

**Sh:** Yes but Ea – what if all that was a dream too? What if you were listening in your dream and talking in your dream and answering questions in your dream?

**Ea:** well you would know that you weren't just hearing things in your head – you would actually hear **real** words!

**Eo:** Hey! That's a really good thought!

**AT** (Spanish teacher): Don't you ever talk in your dreams Ea?

*Ea thinks and smiles for a while and then she says*

**Ea:** Yes but AT ... when **you** hear something in your dreams – does your **whole family** hear it too – when they're sleeping in the same house as you I mean? **I** hear teacher and so can everyone in the room hear her too!

**Sh:** But Ea, guess what I'm going to say next? What if **they** were all in the same dream as well?

*[Pause while everyone laughs at the idea]*

**Mh:** You know when you were talking there a minute ago about real and not real ... well if something's real I think your eyes would be open and if they're not – if you wake up and open them then you know that it was a dream.

**Sh:** But Mh what if you were **dreaming** about opening them?

**Cl:** Ok if you **feel** something and it feels real ... what about that?

**Sh:** (laughing) Cl and what about if **that's** a dream – if you're dreaming that you're feeling something (he chuckles with laughter at his new game)

*Teacher: (holding up her pen): Is this pen real?*

**D:** Yes if it writes ... and if there's stuff like oil in it and it works and you can see what you've written

**Sh:** (Under his breath) ... unless you're dreaming about writing (giggles)

**F:** I think the pen is real. I think it is because I can see it and you're writing with it so you can feel it in your hand and you can see it.

**Ce:** Yes if you can see and feel something and touch it, then it's real

**(Sh:** mutters 'could still be a dream though')

**Eo:** I have a question about real: I have a Jedi Knight at home – Obi Wan Kenobi and its real. But actually there's no such thing as a real Jedi Knight – they don't exist – so how come there's a toy of them?

**H:** If the door wasn't real when you would try to open it, it would tear like paper

**Mh:** I have 2 things to say ... you know when you said ... and I think it was D or F or the 2 of them ... said your pen was real, well if we were dreaming we wouldn't be in school and we wouldn't be able to see that pen when you held it up

**Sh:** Unless we were dreaming about a pen!

**Ea:** First the person who uses his imagination tries to make something and he gets it wrong and he tries again and he tries again and again until he gets it right – maybe that's how Jedi Knights came – out of someone's imagination

**Eo:** Well I really don't think there **is** such a thing as a **real** Jedi Knight ... but then how come they're on TV and how come you can get their sabres in shops and there's a video of them and a computer game and toys and baddies of them and there's even costumes of them – so maybe they are real even though I don't think so ...

**Cn:** Maybe God made toy stuff first to practice and then they come – he made them come to life and he sent them down to earth to be real. Yeah, out of his imagination – first he makes them but they have to star off as babies and then grow and grow up

**F:** Well maybe in your dreams you can hear and see but you can't touch stuff really

**Eo:** God, I am going home today with just so many questions in my head! Millions!

**Teacher:** well maybe that's a good place to end. I think its great that you're going home with millions of questions – that's what learning is all about asking lots of questions. I'm just wondering though .... Do you think anybody knows all the answers?

Chorus of Noooooo!

**Teacher :** No? Not even teachers?

**Eo:** No cos even they ask questions

**Ea:** Yeah teacher, you're always asking us lots of questions!

**Ao:** And remember Eo, if you go home with a questions and you get an answer to it, you could always question the answer.

**Eo:** What does that mean – question the answer? Ao I don't get that ...question the answer? What do you mean????

**Ao:** It just means ask more questions

**Eo:** O God I have even more now!

**Teacher:** my goodness! We've got a lot to think about going home today! Thanks everybody. Very well done!

C.6. Freedom 07 February 2006

**Ky:** People deserve freedom: everybody is human, so in that way everybody is the same. It's not fair if one person makes another person do something they don't want to do. No one is more important than anyone else. I think freedom means that people should be able to do whatever they want, well, except bad things, of course.

**Ce:** I think freedom means that everyone is kind to one another.

**M:** Freedom is where you're allowed to do what you want. You shouldn't really want to do bad things, but to do good.

**Kn:** Well, I kind of think that freedom means that no one can kill people. You can't do bad stuff but you're free to do any kind of good stuff.

**Jk:** Freedom means that you can get away from your job for a while. Freedom means that you wouldn't be working all day you'd have some time. Freedom means do what you want but don't do anything bad: it wouldn't be fair. Freedom is everyone being fair.

**Ts:** Well yeah, maybe...I think doing whatever you want is freedom – even doing bad stuff except it's not good to do bad. But you're free to do it. You have to choose. Freedom is choosing.

**W:** Freedom is like...say ...if you wanted to go in a car, you can. I think that maybe there's like...free freedom and ...sort of ... freedom that's not free, like ..you know...you're free to do good stuff ...but there's freedom to do bad stuff too, but you're not really free to do that, because if you get caught you get punished. But nothing happens to you for using the good freedom.

**Cn:** Freedom would be like, say the government took money from you but then they should give you back some to go on holidays, free, somewhere, very, em, very....exotic, like say your mom and dad wanted to go on a nice honeymoon....to somewhere really nice but they can't cos it's too dear. Well freedom would be if the government helped them. Freedom is something anyone can give to anyone else.

**Cc:** Freedom means you get what you want. You don't have to be able to do anything special to deserve it.

**Cm:** Freedom for me means that there should be no slaves. People should be free to do whatever they want to do.

**Cr:** I agree with Ts that freedom is being able to do whatever you want but you shouldn't have the freedom to kill anyone. Or you shouldn't be able to take over the world and kill people. If there are generals or governors killing other people, someone should be able to stop them.

**Jk:** Teacher, I need to go next cos I'm bursting to speak! I think freedom isn't something you can give to someone. Even if you're emmm....a slave owner: cos that person ...the slave...might have freedom already inside themselves and ....you might be only giving them ...emmm ...sort of ...like... permission or something. Permission doesn't really mean the same thing as freedom. Like, say, if you gave us all the permission to jump up on the tables and shout, we would still sort of have to decide what to do, cos like, you might be after going nuts. (Laughter)

**Hi:** Yeah, I agree: freedom can be inside you. Freedom means you have to make your own choices of doing stuff....not all the time: sometimes you have to do other stuff that you mightn't want like work or school. And I agree with Jk, you would have to decide whether to do what the teacher said or not if it was something like jumping up on the tables, because that might not be very safe and the principal certainly wouldn't want it either.

**Dn:** I think freedom is something you need all the time but sometimes you need it more than other times, like if someone dies and you're very sad you need freedom to be alone, be somewhere all by yourself, to do your own thinking about things, you need sort of .....a place and ...time and that's freedom.

**A:** (English as second language) Free is.... I don't know..... It's maybe...you are free for to **think** everything, but not free for ...to **do** everything.

**K:** I agree with T that freedom would mean doing everything you want even the bad. Well, do you know when you were reading the story [Anne Frank]? Well, you said the Americans joined with Britain to help them against the Germans. Well, in a certain way the Americans when they joined in, they were helping England with freedom, but then that means that they were ....against....they were stopping Germany's freedom...if you take sides you have to.... sometimes you are stopping someone's freedom... well ...a bit...

**Jr:** I agree with Ts and with A too. You can think what you like but you can't always say what you think....freedom would be thinking and saying what you like... Real freedom would mean being free to do everything even if it is killing ...but that might make people do bad as well as good except...well... in a way there's a way to stop people from killing and that's inside you, God put it there. You can be free and not free in lots of other ways too...like if you're a child you're free to play on the grass but not on the road. So the road stops your freedom if you're a child. But a road can be a freedom to someone else ...like if someone was driving going away on their holidays...

**Gn:** I think freedom is to have our lives for ourselves, not to have anyone to own us. I agree about the killing part. Its something inside us that tells us killing is bad and its called shame. If we killed someone we couldn't live with ourselves.

**Dd:** Freedom means everyone has choices. They can choose what they want and what they don't want. Most people don't want to kill, it's very unlikely anyway. Something inside us stops us from killing others. We have that inside us all the time and it helps us to make choices.

**P:** I disagree with some people and I agree with others who said that freedom is doing whatever you want but only in a way. You can only have freedom if you're alone. Because if you were really free to think what you like and say what you like and do what you like it and there were other people around, it could be the baddest thing ever for them because you might want to do all bad things with your freedom... Freedom could be sometimes good but sometimes it could be the baddest thing ever.

**Mo:** Freedom is joy and peace, peace to be whatever you want and joy to play outside.

**L:** I think that freedom is free will. I agree with Dd about choice. Everybody should have choices. God gives us...allows us free will to do bad or good things. He gave us that choice but something inside us tells us when something is bad. It's the part of us that stops us from doing bad things to each other.

**Ca:** Remember back there at the start you were asking what makes us free? Well I think I know: it's probably God. But I disagree with P who said that too much freedom is the baddest thing. If God made it, then it can't be bad. God wouldn't make bad freedom! Another thing...you know how we're free here to speak? Well everyone should be free to speak.... but not to *talk* when other people are speaking. But sometimes people give out to people who give their opinion and that's stopping freedom but...em... Say, em....if people here didn't listen, say they kept talking all the time....that wouldn't really be like ...freedom, it would just be plain rudeness and bad manners and then you'd have to give out to *them*. But that wouldn't be stopping their freedom, it would be stopping their rudeness and it would be helping other people's freedom...the ones what wanted to keep speaking and giving their opinion.

**Me:** *would the chatterboxes not have the freedom to be chatterboxes at all?*

**Ca:** It's not simple...I think you'd probably nearly need two rooms so: one for the talkers to be free and one for the chatterboxes to be free. (Sighs)...freedom can get you in trouble!

C.7. Once upon an ordinary school day 04 October 2005

*I read **Once Upon an Ordinary School day** (Colin McNaughton, Satoshi Kitamura)*

**Ey:** I really liked this story. I think it was good for the boy to have some fun in his life. His life was very boring and he needed some good plain fun.

**Ay:** I think it was quite a good story. Because first everything was ordinary and then it slowly began to go up and up like steps, up, up, up. Then when you think it's going to go down, it doesn't. That was really nice about it.

**Va:** I think Ey and Ay are right. Those things can happen, could happen, and did happen. I'm not really sure if the boy is getting any happier or if his imagination is running away with him.

**Ae:** I think its sort of like his life started off so ordinary. Then suddenly he got a big shock when the teacher burst into the classroom and then more and more amazing things started happening by the minute.

**Cr:** I think it's a very good story and I liked it because who knows maybe his future could have changed because of that day.

**AH:** I agree with Cr. He might have had thoughts that opened his eyes. If I had a day like that I'd have so many thoughts that I wouldn't be able to sleep. They'd be bursting out of me and I'd have bloodshot eyes next day from no sleep and thinking lots of stuff!

**Br:** I think it was a good story. It was a brilliant story with the dolphins and the flying.

**Me:** What bit did you like best of all, Br?

**Br:** I liked the dolphin bit best of all because he was going up and down like that with the dolphin (demonstrates with his arms).

**Se:** I find it very interesting. Everything was so ....ordinary, boring, grey, no changes...suddenly its all colour and everything changes and brightens up. That teacher brightened up his life. I agree with Cr because his life might have gone on being so boring, go to school then work, work, work for all of his life. It would have been really ordinary and boring. But that teacher brightened it all up with imagination and music.

**Sh:** I really think...I agree with Se. That child had no imagination at all. His life was so ordinary. He didn't know what to do with himself. He should have one to the Zoo or something.

**Pr:** I think at the beginning it was all grey and sad and at the end it was colourful and happy.

**De:** I think when he started off using his imagination all different stuff began to happen.

**Ds:** what I think happened was at the start he never used his imagination, he didn't even think he had any and then when he did ... it kind of livened up his life - his imagination did..

**En:** I think when that teacher came in it really made the boy's imagination grow and grow.

**L:** Well I was wondering what wouldn't...what would've happened if the same old boring old teacher arrived back...

**Sh:** If you didn't ever get to use your imagination then your life would be so boring and sad.

**Mre:** Everybody should get the chance to let their imagination go free...get the thoughts out of your head instead of having them just stuck. When he did let o his thoughts look what happened – all the whole thing looked different...all the colours, his life was brightened up. The teacher brightened up the boy's life by letting his thoughts go free...if you didn't ever let your thoughts out no-one would ever know what you had inside your head...

**Ax:** I agree with Se....what she was saying about working all his life and so boring and so ordinary. Maybe it would have been so boring that he wouldn't have even entered college. That teacher was fun. Every child should have a teacher like that. That boy really needed to have a teacher like that for at least one year of his life.

**AD:** I don't really have anything to say.

**Me:** Did you hear what Ax said about the boy needing to have a teacher like that for at least one year...do you think you'll ever have a teacher like that?

**AD:** yes...I did already ....Miss O'B.

**A H:** well to me it seemed like magic...like the teacher was sent by the gods or something to make the boy happy.

**Dn:** I think I liked the way the story just changed in the middle all of a sudden. At the start I was like 'Aw! Come ON'...I didn't think it was very interesting with all those 'ordinaries' all the time...then suddenly it went from being black and white to really colourful. I suppose that was when he started using his imagination. He had to let it go sometime...he wouldn't have liked his life at all if he didn't let his imagination go.

**B:** I think he did have an imagination all along. The teacher didn't give him an imagination, he just allowed him to use it by playing the exciting music...but like Dn said at first he wasn't good at it then... when he heard the music ...and he flew ...and he was cheerful and he wasn't bored any more.

**Hh:** I've been wondering that no one in all the people who spoke already thought how did he [the teacher] disappear like that in a puff of smoke? And I agree with Cr about his future being changed that day. His parents, we saw them at the start and they are just really, really ordinary and maybe that teacher changed their future too... cos maybe that boy ran home and he was all excited and he was saying 'guess what we did in school today?' and then when they listened to him they might have brightened up and that's what I mean about maybe it changed their future too.

**Cn:** Well I'm glad...I'm very glad that that teacher came in when he did, cos with that teacher the boy was changed. He could only see things black and white until that day and then that teacher lightened up his life.

**Mn:** I think that your imagination is like water. It's like water because it can be frozen and the only time it freezes up is when it's not running and being used. It freezes up if you don't use it.

**Interruption (Sh?):** yeah like if you always get wheeled around in a buggy your legs would get very wobbly and weak.

**Am:** I think...I agree with Hh about the magic...he just went off in a cloud of dust. And also if that teacher wasn't there he would've stayed like that forever, like what Mn said about water...he'd have been frozen up like that, never using his imagination forever.

**Ke:** I think the boy had a very good imagination all the time but he didn't know he had. It was there but he only discovered it that day.

**Lh:** I think the story was very exciting. It was the same as Ay said. It goes up in steps.

**AC:** I think that anyone and everyone has all different thoughts from each other...I agree with Lh and Ay too about the steps.

**Ag:** Well I thought it was very sad, then happy, then exciting, then it did go up in steps like Ay said and it kept on going...and everybody liked the boy after that teacher came in.

**MC:** I think the story was really good. It went from being sad and ordinary at the beginning then bits of the picture got colourful and then the pictures in his head kept on going and going and he dreamed a story.

**Dn:** If that story was a piece of music it would be like that (nods his head towards the one note coming from tin whistles next door) – all one note at the start and then it would get like all really exciting and the way the music in the book went.

**Bh:** I think he did have an imagination all along. The teacher didn't give him an imagination, he just allowed him to use it by playing the exciting music...but like Dn said at first he wasn't good at it then... when he heard the music ...and he flew ...and he was cheerful and he wasn't bored any more.

**Ag:** I think when the boy was thinking and when his imagination was running away with him and he was running away with his imagination...that was really great.

**Se:** You know, Teacher, sometimes I start off with no ideas in my head when we begin our talking, but afterwards I often have loads, because I hear all the different thoughts from all different kids'

**Me:** well time's up I'm sorry to say because I was really enjoying that conversation...I just wish that someone could've been here to witness that you all said these wonderful things...

**Ey:** Scuse me teacher...but we're here. You have 29 witnesses...

**Me:**...Wow! so I have! Of course!

C.8. The Conquerors 21 November 2005

*Observer/participant MOC – school principal*

**AH:** That was a funny story. The general had conquered the whole world and he didn't really want anything else so why would he bother with the small country? His soldiers didn't hurt the people, they showed respect for them.

**Ds:** What I think is that he went to conquer a country that had no army. The people there helped the general's army to learn about them by just living with them without fighting. They didn't say 'you better learn our songs and learn to cook like us or learn to wear our clothes'. No they just went on doing their normal things and the soldiers began to imitate them after a while without realising it because it was such a peaceful country. And the people were teaching the army the nice things first - like jokes and songs...the easy, fun things.

**Cr:** If he didn't...if the general didn't conquer the others then they'd all be living different lives...they were changed by meeting the soldiers and the soldiers were changed by meeting them. They affected each other.

**Hh:** I think that the author was trying to make the point that you might think your country is the best but the story is saying that no army is nice. Conquering is not how you should go about your life. Let them live the way they want. Look how bad the earth is from people wanting to conquer each other...all because either they think they're the best or else the other country has something they want.

**AB:** The General didn't respect the little country. The only one he liked was his own and he didn't even respect his own people very much because he was always sending them off to fight. They could get killed. The little country was wise not to have an army. If you have an army you have to fight and they knew well they couldn't win. *He* had the bomb. *They* didn't.

**Le:** Well, I was thinking how that if the general conquered everywhere then all the countries would begin to be the same. They would all have the same language and the same food and the same shops and they would forget their own culture after a while and be just like pieces of the General's country. That would be so boring. He shouldn't have done that to other countries. He should have reasoned with them and said 'I need your gold or your oil' 'Do I have anything ye want? And that would have been fairer. Cos like, when all their gold or whatever is gone, he won't want them anymore and they'll just be wrecked after him and be nothing.

**Am:** I was thinking why did he conquer other countries? Did he not like them or something? They're allowed to be themselves. What makes him think he can just march in and take over? They should all have got together and ganged up on him.

**AD:** I agree with Ae that he didn't respect anyone.

**Ag:** I think that ...you know the little country? Well they kind of conquered him...the general...because he forgot his own songs!

**Sh:** Well I really actually agree with Ae. If you don't respect other humans its not fair to other humans.

**Ke:** I think that all the other countries want to be themselves and the general is stopping them by conquering them. If the generals country was like Rome then soon all the other countries would have to have leaning towers and other things like that. The general is changing their history by conquering them.

**Me:** *Is he changing their history or their future?*

**Ke:** History

**B:** I think both. He's changing their history for the people looking back and he's changing the future for them and for the people not born yet.

**Lh:** It's a good story but I don't understand why generals do that...march into other countries. He has enough stuff, he has his own country. What does he need more for?

**Bh:** It's a very good story but a few things puzzle me. I agree with Ae that he doesn't show respect for anyone. But he was foolish too: why did he go off and leave a bunch of soldiers

on their own. And it shows that good people can conquer by just doing good. They conquered him!

**AC:** I was kind of wondering as well: why did he learn all those things when he didn't really like the little country?

**Mn:** I agree with Ae that its all about respect or not having respect.

**Ay:** Well I think that all the different countries have their own way of conquering and the little country tricked him by having no army. The other day my Mum told me a story about the Romans marching to Scotland ...they thought 'Here's our chance! Boosh!' That's it, you're dead!' Because they had the cannon gun...the little country didn't. You can't argue with a cannon gun or a bomb.

**V:** I think that the point of the story was that you don't have to have a cannon take over another country. If you just learn their songs and stuff and enjoy their culture, you can be taken over by them.

**Pr:** I think that General was a very bad man.

**Dn:** I think that if he had taken over them his life would be different. He could get rid of his enemies very easily by liking them. The little country did that. They didn't fight. The influenced the general's army and then the army went home and influenced the people and then the people influenced the General.

**En:** I thought the point of the story was that you don't have to be the best army or the strongest country to take over another place...all you have to have is strong people. And that's what the little country had, strong people who didn't fight.

**MC:** I think that story is a bit funny. The army go marching in and come out singing. Why? They could have been all shot. The general had a bomb. That would keep them safe from other countries.

**Sh:** I think it was funny at then end. He thought he conquered them but they conquered his heart instead and he ended up singing their songs to his little boy.

**Se:** If he did conquer them it would be so boring. You would go to another country and they would all be exactly the same. You would go over to Africa and you'd be expecting to hear different music and different customs but everything would be just like your won place. Then you'd stop going abroad. ...there'd be no point! That would be so boring if all the world was the same. Every country should be different. That general is silly trying to make them all like his country. What's he going to do when he has taken over the whole lot? He needed a little fun in his life. That's what he got from the little country. They did him a big favour by not fighting.

**Mr:** I think that the small country was right to welcome them in instead of fighting. That way they won.

**MOC:** I have a question: Why did the big General want to conquer the small country?

**An:** I think it would be kind of silly if every country in the world was the same. It's not meant to be like that.

**De:** I think the general didn't do any of the work. He made the soldiers do everything and he took the best house for himself it said in the book.

**Ey:** I agree with De that the soldiers actually did do all the work but the general claimed all the glory.

**Ax:** I think the general didn't really think at all. Suppose someone in Japan thought they'd like the Eiffel Tower and they took it. What use would it be there? People want to see it in France.

**Cn:** I don't think he should have stayed there. He wanted to be better than every other country.

**Se:** Yeah...like he was saying to everybody...I can conquer the whole world. I'm the greatest. Just watch me do it.

**Pr:** I think I can answer Mr O C's question...I think he just wanted to be rich.

**Bh:** He wanted to take over the world. But other people were more powerful than he was even without using an army. Peace is more powerful than war in the end.

**Ay:** Well I think that just going around conquering isn't very useful and after a while when he's got everything he'll just get bored and another thing is what good is the money? He can't use it if it's from that little country. It won't work in his country.

**Sh:** I know the answer too- he wanted to be richer and richer and richer.

**Ag:** I agree with Pr and Ay. He just wanted more stuff. That's so stupid: If he had given the other countries a chance who knows what he might have got? But no he just had to go in ...Bang! Bang! And he wrecked all those countries over being greedy.

**Le:** I think he was after their gold. I agree with Pr and I disagree with Ay. He wanted their money or their gold and he could have converted it to his own money anytime he wanted.

**Cn:** That General was wasting his time. Eventually he'd have conquered everything all the way to the North Pole. Then what's he going to do?

**Ey:** I really disagree that anyone should go into a country without asking the people how they felt about it and just took over...and all just for more richness. And then if the people say 'no' he says 'I'm going to shoot you'. That's bullying. If you want more land you should ask and give them something instead.

**De:** That's why I think the story is good because the little country ends up conquering the general. And the general's army are friendly to the little country now so they're safe from attack now.

**An:** Where would he have got the money from that he robbed from them...where?

**Bh:** I think I have an answer to Mr O C's question; the general just wanted power. He just wanted to be the best, the most powerful man in the world. I disagree with Ey: she said that they should have asked and then the people would have said yes. I think that they'd have said no.

**Ey:** Well I think that instead of war and fighting the person who owned the land should be asked first. He might say 'That's my land. You can't have it. We've always lived here' and they should understand that. The general's army were so used to people fighting them that they never got to respect anyone's country and culture before. So when the people were kind to them they were kind back.

**An:** Why is everyone saying he took over the world? He didn't he only took over a small country!

**Hh:** I sort of disagree with Bh and Ey because if they let the army in once they would always keep coming back every time they wanted more land or more money.

**Ag:** I think that the conquerors were fair to the little country. But some kids reading that story might think that that's the right thing to do: to go around conquering.

**Bh:** The general was foolish. If he wanted everyone to be like him...then eventually everyone would be a conqueror and end up killing him and taking over his country. They'd always be waiting their chance.

**Ax:** I think people might have thought that the little country was foolish to let the general take over so easily. But they well knew what they were doing. They knew they couldn't conquer the general and they were quite well informed about him because they were the last country and they had seen what he always did to the countries that resisted so they taught him a lesson without a cross word.

**Ey:** I agree with Ay that the money would be worthless in his country so its all about power and like he's saying 'Right, I'm the general of the whole world. Give me everything you have'.

**Se:** I actually think that the little country did teach him a lesson.

**Am:** Why did he want more land? What's he planning to use it for?

**Lh:** Look at President Bush and hurricane Katrina, he didn't really care even about his own country and he's always looking for more land too and he doesn't mind the land he's got.

**Am:** I disagree with AH because if they gave him 4 cans of oil he'd be back for more when that's gone.

**Ey:** I agree with Am: If the Iraqis gave President Bush some of their oil he'd soon come back looking for the rest of it so the Iraqis said you can't have any and then Boom! he starts a war.

C.9. Yellow Bird, Black Spider 12 October 2005

**Ca:** I think the story is about being yourself and not just following other people all the time.

**W:** I agree with Ca. It's important to do your own thing.

**CF:** Yeah, maybe, cos like, if you're always just following other people like, without thinking for yourself, and just doing what they want you to do... that could... you could end up in trouble

**O:** Well ...I dunno...maybe...yeah .... but you need to decide whether what they want you to do is Ok...like if your friends were all saying 'come on lets do this' and it was smoking... that wouldn't be good; but if it was like 'come on lets all play a game of chasing' or something that would be different...you're really going to have to make up your own mind about what to do.

**Jk:** I kind of agree with O...I think the spider was being a bit too careful and a bit annoying so the bird sort of was trying to shock him...maybe...he mightn't really like ice-cream.

**Ky:** If you don't be yourself, who would you be? You have to be yourself and you might be a person that does things their own way or else you might be someone that just copies other people but you're always yourself. Your soul might be part of your mind and some people say that your thoughts come from your soul sometimes or from your heart and they could be from all of them and from your mind.

**Jr:** I liked the way the bird stood up for himself. I think your feelings might be in your soul...but maybe your soul is in your feelings ... oh I don't know!

**Crn:** What's the point of that book? I think its something like 'make your own life, don't wait for other people to tell you stuff'. I like that bird a lot!

**Kn:** The bird is a bit too cool. If people did that other people would mock them. The spider was just trying to make sure the bird didn't get in trouble.

**D:** I think it could be about having your own personality. The spider is very nervous – that's his personality. The bird is kind of cheeky. That's his personality. They probably don't get along with each other. Your personality might be part of your soul.

**Ca:** The thing about that book that was good was the ending. You don't expect that ending...it kind of shocks you.

**Kn:** I agree with all the people who said that your soul could be in your feelings and your mind and your feelings and your mind could be in your soul and I never knew anything about that before but I knew that I agreed when I heard it

**L:** The bird is sooo cool. The spider is a bit boring. Like, if you're like that spider you're always thinking should I do this? Should I do that? What will people say? The bird kind of people say 'hey, I don't care...this is what I like'...what's wrong with that?

**Cr:** The best thing about the bird is his attitude. He's very sort of relaxed. He likes some things and he just goes and gets them. The spider would be scared or nervous to try anything new.

**Ja:** I think it's a really good story. The bird is really funny.

**Cy:** I like it because it has a surprise at the end. That spider was getting on my nerves. He got ...it was good enough for him to get eaten

**Ra:** It's a good story. The end was sad for the spider.

**Cc:** It's kind of like the bird is a human. He does things that ordinary birds don't do. He's not scared of anything.

**Gn:** Well...that bird is like a pop star. He is so cool and he smiles his secret smile and pop goes the spider!

**Ce:** the bird is trying to be different. He likes to show off. The spider is an ordinary spider.

**T:** yeah but the spider is trying to make the bird do what he wants not what the bird wants. He bugs him so much he ate him. He was tired of listening to him.

**P:** I don't know why we're all feeling so shocked about the bird eating the spider. That's what birds do...all the time they eat spiders and worms and cute things like ladybirds. So what's so extraordinary about eating a spider? I think it's because we're looking at that bird as if he's human. He's a bird!

**H:** I agree with Gn...he likes to show off and I kind of agree with P too about us thinking its amazing that he ate the spider.

**Jk:** well yes, ...if you think about it ....we eat cows, but you don't see their legs hanging out of our mouths like the spider in the last picture. That's why it's a shock cos we're juts getting used to the way the spider is going on at him...then ...wham!

**Ce:** I think he's very mean to the spider. He could have just hitten [sic] him a whack...he shouldn't of [sic] ate him.

**L:** If you nag someone as much as that spider you should expect to get eaten. Why did he have to go 'nah, nah, nah do this, don't do that' ... on and on? He should have minden [sic] his own business and made a few webs and chilled out a bit.

**H:** I think it's good to do what you want and it's good to do what other people want too. Both of them were right.

**Crn:** It's only a story, right? I mean it's just meant to make us think, it didn't really happen.

**Me:** *Would you have thought, looking at that book for the first time, that we'd get so much talking and thinking from it?*

**Ca:** Definitely not! I was thinking at the start that we wouldn't have a lot to say about that because like T and was it M? ... I thought it was kind of like a baby book...but it's really very good.

## ***Appendix D Examples of in-house evaluations of Thinking Times***

D.1. One of my evaluations from 3<sup>rd</sup> class

Teacher M Roche

Class 3<sup>rd</sup>

Date: 11-01-07

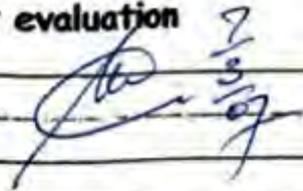
Topic: Brueghel's *'Winter landscape with Bird trap'*



(Note: I didn't provide the children with the actual title of the picture until afterwards)

- I think that this picture is very good because it makes you think about what it must have been like to live a long time ago in the winter with no central heating.
- They probably went skating to keep warm.
- I agree with C because they didn't even have waterproof clothes in those days.
- I'd say it was fun too though because everywhere is full of snow and the water is frozen like a skating rink.
- Children probably had more fun then because they were allowed to play in the snow and stuff.
- The people all look very friendly but the birds look sort of scary.
- I'd say the birds were starving because they didn't have peanuts for them in those days
- The children were having a great time. I don't even think school was invented.
- Its funny to think about what it was like to have no cars or telly or phones or anything. If you got stuck in the forest you'd die.
- What about if you were sick? Would a doctor be able to get there?
- The ramp thing looks fun (birdtrap). You could probably run up it and jump in the snow.
- No. I'd say you'd slide down it.
- The adults were very kind to the kids in those days.

Thinking Time - weekly evaluation

Teacher: M Lane	
Class: Year 3	
Date: 16/2	
Topic: "What did friendship week mean to you?"	
Some examples of children's ideas:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We know that Staring &amp; teasing are bullying. Now we know that we must look out for each other.</li> <li>• We learned alot about the different types of bullying. like exclusion. Before I thought bullying was about being hit/kicked.</li> <li>• Before this week I didn't realise there were so many kinds of bullying. Now I know I must tell if I see it happening.</li> <li>• Now I know that bullying can affect someone's whole life. I thought bullying was funny.</li> <li>• I learned that some bullies don't realise that what they think is normal is actual bullying.</li> <li>• I don't think bullying can be stopped. if you bullied before you can do it again.</li> <li>• Now we can be more aware. We should do this friendship week every year.</li> <li>• I've learned so much about "visual bullying".</li> <li>• Someone once said sthng about my mum - I couldn't tell my Mum.</li> <li>• Bullies are only afraid that they'll get bullied themselves.</li> <li>• Bullying - u can change if u want to.</li> <li>• Friendship week caused confessions!</li> </ul>	

Teacher's comments:  
 • Bullies act like they'd make it look like they're tough - but inside they are weak.

This was one of the best thinking times I've ever done. For the first time every child contributed to the discussion. It was a subject that was very meaningful to them. The girls in particular seemed to be very affected by "visual bullying" - staring at each other and bad looks. The reflection of the past week was a very valuable / positive experience.

\* girls very affected by "staring" / "bad looks".  
 Very occasionally you experience a 'moment' in teaching that you know you'll always remember. This has got to be one of those times for me. If this happens once every five years when doing thinking time, it validates the time spent each week -> taking "time out" from the daily curriculum to do thinking time. A very memorable 30 minutes!

### Thinking Time - weekly evaluation

Teacher: M. Roche
Class: Naí Shóis
Date: 09-05-03
Topic: Feelings
Some examples of children's ideas: Excerpt — • Animals have no feelings • They do! • If I kick an animal they'd scream. • Well, maybe they have only <u>small</u> feelings! • Actually animals have very <u>big</u> feelings about minding their babies! • (r - I think you know everything • Yes I do !!! Thank you R. J for saying that • Don't even mention it!
Teacher's comments: I loved the way this discussion was a blend of formal dialogue & informal chat. It shows me that the children have real understanding of how to conduct a discussion.

/c

D.4. Evaluation from DOS

Thinking Time - weekly evaluation

Teacher:	[Redacted]
Class:	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Date:	Wed March 26 <sup>th</sup> (2003) <sup>wa</sup>
Topic:	Why does the tide come and go?
	Some examples of children's ideas:
	① The wind blows the tide in and out.
	② Big ships make waves that cause the tide to go in and out.
	③ Its like the moon - the moon goes in and out.
	④ The moon pushes the tide in and out
	⑤ The waves make the tide come in.
	⑥ Swimming fish cause waves and that causes the tide.
	⑦ <del>Cause</del> the moon is a magnet to the sea.
	⑧ When boats see the tide they know there is going to be a storm.
	⑨ <del>Teacher's comments</del> The moon is a big magnet & when it moves it pulls the tide with it.
	⑩ The moon is a magnet to the sea, this causes waves and the waves is the tide - big ships only cause little waves.

~~Teacher's Comment:~~ Some children remained completely unaffected by the scientific explanation for the tide and continued to use "imaginative" explanations eg. "Swimming fish cause the tide"

No ⑩ not only offers a complete scientific explanation, but the respondent went back to an answer offered about 15 mins. earlier (No. 2) and ~~qualified~~ qualified it - "the ships only cause little waves".

Thinking Time - weekly evaluation

Teacher: R
Class: Junior Infants
Date: 10 <sup>th</sup> April 2003
Topic: "Too much Talk" by Angela Shelf Medearis
Some examples of children's ideas:
J: "Why did the yam talk?"
E: "Why were they running?"
C: "I wanted to know why the water talked."
F: "Why did the theone talk? No one thought of that one, did they?"
S: "No."
K: "Yes, J did."
D: "No, she thought of the water"
M: "What's a yam?"
E: "Why does the thing that m said talk?"

(A) {  
(B) {

Teacher's comments: I read the story explaining first that I'd like to hear their questions at the end. Very eager at first to ask questions throughout the story. This settled down as story progressed. Enjoyed story very much. A lot of the questions related to why/how the different things spoke. Good listening was apparent, as illustrated by A + B above. When asked by teacher what they thought a "yam" was, answers varied from 'a sheep'.

"a dog" ("you did not water me, you did not weed me. And here you come to dig me up!!) to a tree and a seed by drawing attention to contextual and pictorial cues, children's guesses became closer to the truth!!

## Appendix E Samples of children's responses to music and art

### E.1. Responses to Gasparyan





This music reminds me of swans in a lake and birds flying for the winter.

This music reminds me of swans in a lake and birds flying for the winter.



This music reminds me of the foodchain. The animals are a tiger, a falcon, a mouse, a spider and a fish. I like it because it is calm.

This music reminds me of the foodchain. The animals are a tiger, a falcon, a mouse, a spider and a fish. I like it because it is calm.

E.2. Responses to Brueghel



Hi I AM A HUNTER  
My name is Henry. It is a winter morning and I am out looking for food for my family. I have been hunting for four hours I haven't caught anything. I hear a noise It must be something I look behind the branch I see it It is people ice skating I must have a go but I don't have any food yet any way I'll do it. Wee this is so fun. So back I have to go home. I home all of my family ran down stairs. did you get anything no. Wear have you been ice skating ice skating you promised me that you would get something but I was looking for four hours and I didn't see any thing. Pleas forgive me pleas kids no dinner today I will go out tomorrow again. Cal a daddle do Come on out of bed.



Hallo my name is Nicole. I am eight years old. I live in Iceland. I live with my mom, my dad, my older brothers and my older sisters. We live in a cottage near a pond. A few weeks ago the pond got frozen over. Yesterday my older brothers and sisters taught me how to ice skate. Now I can ice skate by myself. Earlier today I was out skating and I saw some hunters. They were chasing birds, rabbits and mice. I always feed the birds, rabbits and mice. I ran up the hill and told the hunters that the animals were my friends. They laughed and told me to go home. I ran home and got the food to meet at once. The animals came over. Then I ran home again and got some bones for the dogs. Then I throw them and the dogs ran after them. Then the hunters run after the dogs.

E.3. Poetic responses to picture of sunset



**This picture looks like a devil's arrival.**

**Making the pink think.**

**Stop, go or flow.**

**The mountain looks really black**

**As if it has plaque**

Once there was a sunset, no ordinary sunset.

The sea turned orange and the sky set on fire

. The fish turned gold, the squid and octopus turned

bronze,

The whales turned silver and the turtles turned orange in

great glory.

Once there was a sunset  
Like no other.  
It was  
On the other  
Side of the mountain.  
Every one went  
To see what it was  
At first nothing was there  
Then  
BANG!!  
Happy New year's day!

I love it when the sky is red  
It reminds me of my nice warm bed.  
The sun travels behind the hills,  
And leaves the sky that its light fills.  
The water ripples beneath my feet  
Like a Roman Captain leading the fleet.  
The hills' shadows are on the waves  
They're so black they look like caves.  
A sunset is so full of glory  
It's the exact opposite of something  
gory.

I like it when the sky is coloured  
It makes me feel warm and cosy  
With the orange sea and the pinkish purplish sky  
And with the mountains afar  
It looks such a sight

E.4. Written responses to picture of trees and Vermeer



The Forest of sound

When I'm sad or happy I like to walk through the forest of sound. When I'm sad I hear sad music. The sad music is low down soft and slow. In the Winter it's different to the music I hear in the Summer. This is because in the Summer there are more <sup>leaves</sup> and birds and more flowers. In the Winter the trees are empty and the birds are gone and flowers won't grow. When I'm in a bad <sup>mood</sup> the forest cheers me up. When I'm very happy I love going to the forest. When I'm just happy I like going through the forest. <sup>and</sup> Because the music and sounds are fast exciting <sup>and</sup> it makes me want to dance.

Beautiful!



The magic orchard

Far, far away in a magical land lived creatures <sup>very</sup> nice and grand. There was a magical orchard in the <sup>center</sup> of this land. Its fruit could cure all illness but it was guarded by a dark force. One day a chieftain fell ill so he assembled his best <sup>and</sup> <sup>strongest</sup> warriors, some supplies and set off. The journey to the orchard <sup>was</sup> <sup>long</sup> and it would take a fortnight. They overcame many hazards including forest fires, unbridged lakes and goblin attacks. They spoke to the <sup>guardians</sup>, they got some fruit, gave the fruit to the chieftain and he got better.

The End.

Lovely!



## The weeping Girl

A few years ago there was a very poor girl called Maria. She was depressed and she <sup>looked</sup> on the bad side of life. Her hobby was art. She loved painting. When she was 18 years of age she became famous for her art. She moved to a flat in Holland. Everyday when she went outside huge crowds gathered round her. After a few years ~~later~~ when she was 22, she was brought to court for no reason. After a while the judge said she was guilty and she was put to jail. The guards <sup>chose her</sup> to go into a dark cell, after a few weeks she started to draw pictures and day the guard

It love to hear what happened next, i -!  
well done!



## A Dutch Girl

I think this girl is Dutch, she looks it. In this picture she looks miserably and sad, like one of her favourite things has just floated away from her. She looks poor <sup>at</sup> the same time as she looks like a princess walking down marble steps. Her green coat is too big for her so she probably found it. ~~so~~ That tells us that she might be poor. But she must have some money because of those earrings. She couldn't <sup>have</sup> found them because nobody would let their earrings get lost.

Well done! R - s

## Appendix F Extract from RE teacher's handbook

F.1. Extract from Alive-O 5 Teachers' Book (Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics, 2001).

T1 L7

### Overview of the Week

Song: <i>Bless the Lord</i>	Continue song	Continue song	Continue song	Reflecting on the Week
Chatting before the story-poem	Recall story-poem	Recall story-poem	Recall story-poem	Prayertime
Story-poem: <i>Oisín and St Patrick</i>	Chatting about	The First Monasteries	Continue art	
Chatting after the story-poem	Oisín and St Patrick	Art: <i>The Book of...</i>	Video: <i>Christianity comes to our Country</i>	
Prayertime	Prayertime	Prayertime	Worksheet	

### Day One



SONG

**Bless the Lord**



CHATTING

...before the story-poem

Have you ever helped someone who is very old? What did they look like? How did their hand feel to you? Can you describe their face/voice/hair? How did they walk? Did they use a stick? Oisín feels useless. Are all old things useless? Can you think of any things that become more and more precious as they grow older? What about old stories/old songs/old prayers/old times, etc.? In last week's story Oisín fell off his horse and went straight from being young to being old. How do you think he felt? How was his life different then?



STORY-POEM

**Oisín and St Patrick**

*See end of lesson.*



CHATTING

...after the story-poem

Let's look at Oisín's gods – what picture do we get of them? Let's go back through Oisín's lines and, as we do, put your finger on a line that you like and with your other hand put a finger on one that you don't like. (Allow the children some time to call out the lines they have chosen and say why they have chosen them.) Now let's go back and listen to/read Patrick's lines – put your finger on one that is similar to and another that is different from the lines describing Oisín's gods.

How do you think the Oisín in this story feels? Do you think he is right about his gods – that they will want nothing to do with him now that he is old and feeble? If you could talk to the Oisín in the poem, what would you say to him? What do you think you might do to help him? Do you

## **Appendix G Emailed responses from educators to 'a question about your schooldays'**

G.1. My email

*Subject: a question about your schooldays*

*Date: Wed, 25 Jan 2006 17:34:44 -0000*

Hello everybody,

Mary Roche here. Most of you know me but some may need reminding. I am a primary school teacher working in Cork. I am currently carrying out a study on critical thinking with primary school children for a doctoral degree with the University of Limerick. This study is following on from my MA in Education study into Philosophy with Children.

In my report I have referred to a discussion I carried out with my third class primary school students about 'what is the purpose of school?' I made the point that this topic is one that I was never asked to consider during my schooldays. In fact, I don't think I engaged in any real discussion of this topic until I began my post graduate studies. It was probably the theme of a lecture in training college (back in the 1970s) but there was no discussion of the topic and I certainly did not critically engage with it then.

I am sending out this email to all of you who are involved in the business of education at different levels: primary, post primary, and third level and I am going to ask you all the same question I asked myself:

**Were you ever given an opportunity to think about, discuss or engage critically with the question 'what is the purpose of school?' when you were in school?**

I appreciate the time you have taken to read this. If you choose to reply, may I have your permission to use your reply as data for my research report? I guarantee confidentiality: no names will be used.  
with best regards

Mary

G.2. Responses from PL

***Email received on 25-01-06 from PL – a critical pedagogue at third level college in USA and author of several books on critical pedagogy.***

I moved around a great deal as a kid because my father was a doctor setting up programs for child abuse and for kids with disabilities. It wasn't until I was a junior in high school in Amherst Massachusetts, U.S. that I bumped into a cool teacher who taught an alternative course on work, and a guidance counsellor who was an outcast amongst faculty, and was encouraged to think about the purpose of schooling, about labour stratification and cultural reproduction...about my place in the world.

Otherwise, schools played the typical role of reflecting the larger social order and keeping youth on the line. Resisters were always punished in one form or another. It's no wonder

conservatives in the U.S. moved from wanting to dismantle the Department of Education to taking it over -- in order to make sure that they can control young minds through the standardization of curricula and pedagogy in the name of No Child Left Behind. So much for education for civic responsibility. Hard to have any substantive, participatory democracy without the ability to make sense of the world around us. In that sense, public schools are doing the exact job that they have been designed to do. But like I did throughout my childhood, I'm using my energy as a professor in a teacher education program to combat this type of domestication. All the best

PL

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G.3. Response from S. W.

***Email received on 25-01-06 from SW (Canada), former elementary school teacher, third level college of education professor and author of several books on teaching***

Dear Mary:

Your question made me smile! When I went to elementary school (way back there in the days when dinosaurs roamed the earth), we sat in straight rows, DID NOT SPEAK, in fact, were penalized for talking. We sat and sat, waiting for the next teacher directive. We never were allowed even to question, lest that be taken as an affront to the teacher, the all knowing authority on everything. Children did not have opinions, or points of view -- so why on earth would anyone ask them?

So your question is easy to answer, although it is a sad commentary on what my education was like.

Each of us works for change in his or her own way and we do so, inch by painful half inch, across the years. And when we look back, some of us can actually see many teachers who prize, value and respect kids, and whose classrooms are models of humanity and regard, as well as educational excellence. Keep fighting the fight; it's worth it.

The orientation you have chosen for your doctoral work is, I believe, most difficult and most rewarding. For teaching, after all, is an act of self discovery when it is done

well. And that is where so much of the gratification lies for such a difficult and challenging work. Those discoveries, alas, are reserved for the few who would undertake such rigorous self examinations -- not for sissies. I am full of admiration for your quest and am cheering you quietly onward, from this rainy loft in downtown

V\_\_\_\_r.  
S

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G.4. Response from PD

***Email received on 26-01-06 from PD, former primary teacher, now college of education lecturer in Ireland***

Dear Mary,

No I never had an opportunity to discuss the purpose of school either at first or second level and yes feel free to use this information. Not only did I not have an opportunity to discuss it, I think any such question would have been viewed as disruptive by teachers and possibly would even have been a punishable offence.

With best regards  
P

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G.5. Response from P.A-LaF.

***Email received 29-01-06 from PA-LaF an elementary school teacher (USA)***

The answer is no. We were told why we were in school, but never was it discussed as an open question

ELEM to HIGH SCHOOL YEARS: 1959-1971 (1ST-12TH GRADES)

And never in college classes was this discussed as a class:

COLLEGE YEARS: 1971 TO 1978 (INCLUDING MASTERS DEGREE)

P

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G.6. Response from P.M-M

***Email received on 26-01-06 from PMM, University lecturer and former secondary school teacher (Ireland)***

Hello Mary

As far as I remember I was never given the opportunity to discuss this nor was it ever raised as a thinking point.

Best regards

P

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G.7. Response from B.S.

Hi Mary,

I must admit that, like you, I was never asked to reflect on the question, 'What is the purpose of school?' I think that, both from my own experience at school and from my experience as a student at a teacher training college, I gained the impression that school was a means of transferring as much knowledge as possible into the minds of more, or less, willing pupils.

I only began to ask myself that question quite recently, when I became aware of the inappropriate nature of the culturally specific education being offered to Traveller children. It would not have occurred to me, therefore, that children should be asked, or could answer, a question requiring such critical thinking. However, when I attended 'Dáil na bPáistí' with some of my Traveller pupils and heard one of them suggesting that the Traveller language, Cant, should be taught in schools, I realised that children are indeed capable of reflecting critically on questions such as 'What is the purpose of school?'

B

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G.8. Response from B.L.

*Email received on 29-01-06 from BL critical friend on PhD study programme*

As to your question I never remember being asked that question while in school. Then in the context of those times "where children were seen but not heard" the idea of asking children their opinion on anything would not have been considered other than as a joke. I don't think anyone pondered that question children or parents, teachers even because in some ways then the question seemed answered. The purpose of school was to learn to read and write and other knowledge that would help you secure a job. Where you finished in school determined your job. So for me even though I never was asked the question I think I believed the purpose of school was to prepare you for work.

B

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## **Appendix H Samples of reports by observers of Thinking Time**

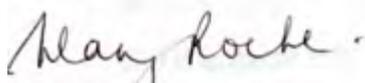
H.1. My request to colleagues

Validation for data collection October/November 2005

Dear 

On Mon 21<sup>st</sup> Nov 05 you observed a Thinking Time with my class.  
I'd be grateful for any comments you could make regarding the experience.

Regards



H.2. Observation report by CO'C

Thinking Time gave all the children the equal chance to speak – there were no correct or incorrect answers – so I think this helped each and every child to 'shine' – shine brightly.

There was great respect shown by everyone involved and this respect was shown to each and every child and to the teachers. Their opinions were valued and the children knew this.

I had to remind myself a number of times as to which class I was listening to. I tried to think of another 3<sup>rd</sup> class that I have had experience of – I realised that the children in Mary's class really knew how to think *and* express themselves. I was also amazed at their ability to remember what others had said and integrate this with their own opinions.

Mary I hope this makes sense. Thinking isn't that easy – but your class made it look very easy and, most of all, enjoyable.

COC 14 November 2005

H.3. Observation report by D.M.

Thinking Time provides a forum that allows less academic children to shine. The children were very engaged and comfortable in the circle. It was a democratic setting and the teacher's role was not autocratic or managerial. Children were being given opportunities in a fair way and the children seemed to feel safe and free in the setting and they were able to contradict each others comfortably without confrontation. The children's ideas were very structured and surprising and not what I would have expected to hear from young children. The dynamic of the circle was very inclusive. I feel that the sessions are beneficial educationally for the children because listening to and responding to points in turn and articulating your point of view logically (however contradictory) without tension or aggression is of huge social importance.  
DM 8 November 2005

H.4. Observation report by S.D.

Mary

I found the session very enjoyable. The children seemed very interested and at ease in the group. They were attentive when others were speaking and used the ideas of others to expand on their own thoughts.

Giving children the option to do a 'hands up' in the later part of the session is a very good idea, in my opinion. Some children are more comfortable than others at expressing an opinion or speaking to a group

SD 14 November 2005

H.5. Observation report by YO'F

On Friday the 6<sup>th</sup> of February I sat in our class to do an observation on cognitive development, the age group was mainly 5 year olds but there are a couple that are 6. Mary (teacher) told the children a story called Dear Green Peace, a story of a little girl called Emily who wrote to Green Peace to tell them she had a whale called Arthur in her garden. The children loved the story.

Mary then said we are going to talk about pets, ones the children have or would like to have or whatever.

To be honest what happened next was the most amazing conversation I have ever heard in a group of children in all my years dealing with or caring for children, They started talking about their goldfish and their birds their friend's pets and granny's and cousins pets, then one child said that his dog made a plan to catch his cat because he tried to kill his goldfish that led the children to talking about whether animals think and have their own language.

This then led on to a conversation about human thoughts and brains and if a brain was taken from one child and put into another child would the second child that got the brain know all the memory and thoughts of the first child.

They thought about it and discussed if their brain slept or not, did their skin stay awake while they were asleep, they felt it had to how else would they turn in the bed at night

I was blown away at the way these very young children sat for over an hour and listened to each other, I was enthralled at the whole conversation it was a most thought provoking morning .

1/1/06 9/3/06

H.6. Observation report by A.T.

**An observation of a Thinking Time discussion**  
***Mary Roche's Senior Infant Class 6 February 2004***

The first thing I want to say is that it was one of the most interesting things I have ever seen in my life. It was very exciting to see how five and six year old children have such deep thoughts about such difficult and abstract topics as the soul, thinking/thoughts and death.

The most incredible thing for me was that we started speaking about pets and we finished speaking about thinking and dreaming.

I think some of the children's ideas were incorrect but I delighted in the way they reasoned to arrive at these conclusions.

Sh. [redacted] was the child who most impressed me. All the ideas he had were developed and reasoned perfectly. He never said 'Yes, because yes' or 'No, because no'. He explained very well what he thought about each concept and gave reasons for his argument.

Another thing that was very interesting was that the children could sustain listening and speaking for around one and a half hours. There were some of them that weren't listening all the time. They were listening, speaking; then they lost concentration for a few moments; then they started again to listen and to participate in the conversation. I think that it is very difficult for them to concentrate for so long on the same thing, but it was amazing how a lot of them could.

I also think that although the children had all the discussion responsibility, the teacher had also a very important role, because she must know how to direct the discussion by asking some questions, because if not, the topic might veer off in different directions and it could have been a disaster. The teacher had also to listen very carefully without speaking for a long time. This is a difficult skill for a teacher to learn because normally a teacher is the one who does most of the talking in a classroom. In *Thinking Time* the teacher must use her power wisely and discretely so that the children have control of the discussion.

There were some people (me included) who thought that the time the children were speaking for was very short – I could have stayed listening to them for hours and hours, speaking with so much passion about what they think.

A great experience.

Mary Roche 23/2/04  
[redacted]  
24-2-04