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Literature as a Remedy for the (De)sensitization of the Contemporary Child. Attempt of Practical Approach Using the Theme of War

Literatura jako remedium na (de)sensybilizację współczesnego dziecka. Próba praktycznego ujęcia z wykorzystaniem tematu wojny

KEYWORDS

children's literature,
sensitivity, working
with a literary text,
taboo subjects (war),
early childhood
education

ABSTRACT

The text is theoretical in its nature and deals with the subject of the influence of literature on the child in early school age in terms of affecting the sensitivity of the recipient. The author considers the phenomenon of (de)sensitization as a process that would help the modern child to accept taboo phenomena on the example of the subject of war. The article refers to the theory of the Highly Sensitive Child and the “bitter-sweet” impact of art, recalling the works of Elaine Aron and Susan Cain. It was emphasized that the child's hypersensitivity to certain images or sounds is related not only to natural stages of development, but also, or perhaps mainly, to individual predispositions to sensitivity to stimuli. The considerations included in the article also refer to war-themed texts for children published in Poland. The researcher provides a list of reading materials that may be interesting for contemporary child readers, but are not part of the school canon. The text is supplemented by a practical example of working with Liliana Bardijewska's work entitled *Karim's Cat and Pictures* with the use of a board game as a form of work with text at the level of grades I–III of primary school.

SŁOWA KLUCZE ABSTRAKT

literatura dziecięca,
wrażliwość,
praca z tekstem
literackim, temat
tabu (wojna),
edukacja
wczesnoszkolna

Tekst ma charakter teoretyczny i podejmuje temat oddziaływania literatury na dziecko w wieku wczesnoszkolnym w aspekcie wpływu na wrażliwość odbiorcy. Autorka rozważa zjawisko (de)sensibilizacji jako procesu, który pomagałby współczesnemu dziecku w przyjęciu zjawisk tabu na przykładzie tematu wojny. W artykule odniesiono się do teorii wysoko wrażliwego dziecka oraz „słodko-gorzkiego” oddziaływania sztuki, przywołując prace Elaine Aron i Susan Cain. Zaakcentowano, że nadwrażliwość dziecka na niektóre obrazy czy dźwięki jest związana nie tylko z naturalnymi fazami rozwoju, ale także, a może w głównym stopniu, z indywidualnymi predyspozycjami wrażliwości na bodźce. Rozważania nawiązują ponadto do wydanych w Polsce utworów dla dzieci o tematyce wojennej. Badaczka podaje listę lektur, które mogą być interesujące dla współczesnych dziecięcych czytelników, a nie wchodzą w obszar szkolnego kanonu. Tekst uzupełniony jest o praktyczny przykład pracy z utworem Liliany Bardijewskiej pt. *Kot Karima i obrazki* z zastosowaniem gry planszowej jako formy pracy z lekturą na poziomie klas I–III szkoły podstawowej.

Introduction

In this article I continue to discuss various aspects of children's literature and the way they form the sensitivity of the reader. Just like creativity educators, I assume that signs of culture and art become important in this process, as long as the child is in contact with them (Gołaszewska, 1997).

Research by Stella Chess and Alexander Thomas shows that within sensitivity, four categories can be distinguished that are linked to temperament types. In addition to types such as sensory processing sensitivity, social anxiety and sensitivity to changes, the researchers mention emotional sensitivity. The latter is characterised by being easily moved, having little resilience to stress, experiencing strong emotions, and being prone to anxiety (as cited in Poland 2000, pp. 15–23).

Although temperament traits are largely innate, it seems that particular sensitivity manifested by verbal and behavioural reactions, in addition to genetic factors, is to some extent acquired by children as a result of environmental influences. According to Janet Poland, temperament can be changed because “it tends to be an inclination towards certain behaviours” (Poland, 2000, p. 40), and the solution to hypersensitivity is not avoiding tasks that cause discomfort, but rather facing them in a safe atmosphere. The research states that “systematic desensitization is used when trying to reduce the anxiety or nervousness which is a reaction to a particular object or situation”. In the title of the article, I used the term “desensitization”, which comes from

the English word “sensitive”. In the PWN Dictionary of Polish, one of the meanings of the related term is “desensitizing a body”, or “making a living being stop feeling pain” (PWN, n.d.). From this I derive the idea that reading literature with a specific theme, the accompanying conversation about the meaning of the literary work, and active methods of working with the text can influence the level of sensitivity associated with a specific subject. In order to get rid of difficult feelings, the child should learn about the issue slowly, in the company of someone close. Literature is helpful in this process (Molicka, 2012). Therefore, desensitization is understood here as the result of reading that leads to a reduction of unpleasant feelings of anxiety or nervousness that are associated with a specific object or situation.

Taboo Subjects in the Process of (De)sensitization

What may expose the listener or observer to sensations stronger than the norm are taboo subjects within a given culture (Sochańska & Czechowska, 2012). These include illness, death, disability, body, sexuality, divorce, disgust, etc. It is worth noting that attitudes towards them are determined by belonging to a particular culture, as what may be prohibited in one cultural area does not evoke such reactions in another.

Monika Szubrycht (2022) identifies important elements influencing the shape of a child’s world, such as family and school environment, sexuality, attitudes to the media, punishments and rewards, past traumas. The taboo subjects noted in works of children’s literature include many of these phenomena, as does the reality in which the child grows up. Living in society, therefore, requires the provision of security for children, which is one of the basic human needs and should be met in an environment of adult caregivers during childhood (Maslow, 2006, pp. 115–119). Reading, including reading with an adult, is one component that satisfies the need. It is worth noting that shared reading also meets the needs for belonging and love, which are essential for the child’s proper development.

In medicine, one of the ways of desensitizing a patient is putting them in contact with an allergen contained in a substance other than the original one, i.e. in the medicine. It seems a similar effect concerns emotions. The calm, safe exposure of the child to literature containing content that may seem anxiety-producing in real life should lead to an alleviation of the hypersensitive reaction. This kind of effect of literature has been used since ancient times and has been termed bibliotherapy in modern times. Literature makes it possible to verbalise feelings; to slow down the anxiety-generating process caused by the anxiety-producing factor. According to Magdalena Wiatrowska, from the point of view of psychology, “verbalising, i.e. naming what a person feels, allows the brain to make contact with the cerebral cortex, i.e. the part of the brain

that is responsible for logical thinking” (as cited in Szubrycht, 2022, p. 15). A child’s hypersensitivity to certain images or sounds is not only related to natural developmental phases, but also, and perhaps mainly, to individual predispositions to sensory sensitivity. W. T. Boyce’s (2019) theory, confirmed by research, speaks of two types of sensitivity, which the researcher described using the terms “orchid child” and “dandelion child”. The psychologist points to the very important role of neurodiversity and the family environment in the development of the hypersensitive (orchid) child. Boyce’s and Elaine Aron’s theories have rekindled the interest of educators in the issue of the diverse sensitivity of children. Some have undertaken research and the creation of parenting approaches specific to highly sensitive children (abbreviated WWD in Polish) (Juil, 2011; Cohen, 2020; Aron, 2021; Sołtys-Para, 2023).

Polish therapists point out the good sides of high sensitivity and advise how to deal with it. They consider literature, such as therapeutic fairy tales written for emotional support, as one of the sources of support (Brett, 2006; Sand, 2016; Stażka-Gawrysiak, 2022). Psychologists advise taming negative feelings of anxiety by slowly introducing the child to a fear-generating object, such as water, darkness, or an image of something the child is afraid of. Urszula Sołtys-Para cites the opinion of Lawrence J. Cohen who writes that “children who are afraid of novelty become more vulnerable to anxiety when parents ‘protect them’ by allowing them to avoid the sources of any anxiety, rather than helping them develop coping strategies” (as cited in Sołtys-Para, 2023). Susan Cain’s book *Bittersweet*, on the other hand, was based on the inner individual need to feel sad. The author writes of “melancholic tendencies [...] to wallow in longing, grief, sadness” (Cain, 2022, p. 21). This particular, bittersweet ruminating, as Cain puts it, occurs already in childhood and is always linked to art. Reading literature can be a helpful strategy, as it allows one to relieve unpleasant moments while remaining in the shoes of a literary character. Difficult experiences can be discussed with the child through a literary mediator. The substitute experience of anxiety frees the recipient from the real anxiety. Educational activities leading to a balance in the area of sensitivity to difficult situations would therefore be advisable. This would be a kind of desensitization that would make it possible to gain confidence in one’s own power through skilful handling of one’s own sensitivity, anxiety and the resulting stress.

Taboo subjects arouse fear mainly in adults. They are the ones who, by overreacting emotionally or avoiding them, show this reaction pattern to children. In a situation of hypersensitive reactions, a communication barrier is created, expressed by the phrase: “We don’t talk about it”. And yet, the taboo subject is usually an important area. It triggers questions from children: What is it? Where does it come from? What is it used for? Why does it exist? When adults do not answer the questions, a tension of cognitive dissonance arises, because the child does not get an answer without knowing why. Literature and art are a good pretext to start a conversation on such a topic.

In supportive interaction, educators focus on positive reinforcement. They are concerned with preparing children for life in the modern world, which is geared to a constant readiness to struggle. It becomes important to pursue a goal at all costs, while this should be accompanied by a joyful attitude towards a good future. Parents teach their children to be assertive and, at the same time, optimistic in case of difficulties. Societies are absorbed with consumption, the need to possess objects, or the race against time, as if everyone has some sporting goal to attain. However, it seems that not everyone can or wants to be a champion. According to Cain, it is behind the bittersweet melancholy that the right ‘momentum’ lies (Cain, 2022, p. 25). The feeling of boundless sadness and sorrow evoked by art opens up a path towards the land of freedom. Perhaps there would be nothing special about this, were it not for the fact that the protagonists of significant children’s works are precisely orphaned children whose fate evokes feelings of discomfort: *Anne of Green Gables*, *King Matt I*, *Pippi Langstrumpf*, the characters in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, or *Harry Potter*. The longing for familial warmth, a sense of security and love is closely linked to the construction of this type of literary character which is already exalted by virtue of being an orphan. When we add the understanding of orphanhood as a state of holy grace, we are just one step away from the transcendent feelings associated with the reception of art. Its different types: music, painting, film, literature, can lead to an understanding of the meaning of being human – a rational and spiritual being who is, at the same time, empathic. Children’s literature is able to touch upon the emotions of its audience and, like literature for adults, has an effect on its readers. Many adults say that when they were reading as children, they experienced special feelings that no other experience could replace. This is why I focus on children’s works, looking for taboo areas that, on the one hand, involve sensitization, and, on the other hand, reduce it. When reading literature that contains anxiety-provoking themes, a process of taming them takes place. Although they may initially evoke fear, anxiety, repulsion or sadness as a result of learning about a story from beginning to end, the reader gains an experience that is different from their initial feelings. It is not only the “sensitive” subject matter that is important here, e.g. war, death, suffering, but precisely getting to know the entire story, which, when presented as a literary work, also has an important message in its form. The artistic shape of the text is important here.

The reader’s confrontation with suffering, with a feeling that arises in them and remains their emotion, is an unavoidable experience in the process of reception of taboo-focused literature. In order for this process to take place properly, an immersion in the work that appeals to the sensitivity that the child already possesses is essential. Learning about war themes in educational experience leads to recognising the facts, taking them apart, identifying the components. A school-based, curriculum-based analysis of literature is unlikely to include inner emotional responses. It is because such

analysis provides ready-made answers – the puzzle has been solved; the reader knows everything. In my opinion, what happens then is a caricature of desensitization, because it is this bittersweet context that is important in the encounter with this type of content, which offers a combination of pain and relief, fear and courage, despair and joy. Such reception leads to noticing the beauty of life when “one becomes sensitized to this particular combination of sweetness and bitterness” (Cain, 2022, p. 33). As Keltner’s research shows, the ‘compassion instinct’, meaning ‘feeling together’, which leads to pro-social behaviour and relationship-building, is fundamental to a person’s emotional life (Cain, 2022, pp. 46–47). Thus, if a literary work arouses sympathy in the reader because of the fate of a character, instinctive reactions of sympathy are likely to emerge. A war perspective always leads to episodes that evoke fear or sadness. Thus, it turns out that a literary text, by combining aspects of aesthetic beauty and character suffering, evokes that bittersweet emotional context that is relevant to the world of human sensitivity, creativity and social cooperation (Cain, 2022, p. 50).

On the other hand, however, there is a tendency on the part of parents to avoid difficult topics in the works they choose for their children. Curricula invariably report that works for children should have an optimistic tone. In the current curriculum for the primary grades, there are three readings with uplifting plots touching on difficult topics: Joanna Papuzińska’s *Asiunia* (war), Roman Pisarski’s *O psie, który jeździł koleją* [*The Dog which Was Travelling by Train*] (the death of an animal), Barbara Kosmowska’s *Dziewczynka z parku* [*Girl from the Park*] (mourning after the death of a father). In each of them, the authors tell the story in a different way and distribute the ‘emotional’ accents differently. It is difficult to judge whether this is a sufficient number of works through which one may talk about what affects human sensitivity. It certainly seems that the themes of ecology, about which we talk a lot nowadays; illness, which is, after all, part of everyday life of many children; and family conflicts, in which children are very often involved as witnesses or victims, all appear too rarely. In addition to these problems, topics that speak of the difficulties of a child’s world – such as the loss of a beloved pet, the loss of a favourite toy, the death and illness of loved ones – would provide a pretext for conversation, reflection, or sometimes therapy.

If one were to assume that learning about grief and accompanying suffering leads to empathy, builds a bond with the other person/animal/object, strengthens cooperation and develops creativity, then one could put forward the thesis that curriculum-based literary education contains too few items of this kind. Thus, lessons do not provide opportunities to talk to children about all difficult and really important topics.

Therefore, if, in the process of educating children, we were able to help the students translate sadness/grief into creative activities, the effect of the work would not only provide didactic, but also therapeutic, cognitive and autotelic values. This could

be achieved on the condition of turning to the bittersweet emotions and meanings of a given text.

The Taboo Content of a Text in Teaching Practice – Using a Board Game

The simplest and most frequently posed questions when working with a text at school are: What does the protagonist/character look like?; What does he/she do?; Where does he/she live?; Where and when is the action set?; etc. These are, of course, important questions dictated by the structuralist approach to a literary text, but given that structuralism is already a rather conservative current, it would be appropriate to turn to more up-to-date methods of analysis and interpretation, indicated by the works of Dorota Kluz-Stańska (2003), Danuta Dobrowolska (2015) and Danuta Czelakowska (2020). For example, incorporating contexts resulting from the subjectivisation of reception into the discussion of the text would significantly enhance the quality of the didactic process. It is worth enriching the previously mentioned questions with new ones, such as: What did the protagonist/character feel?; What do you think about his/her feelings?; Do you know them from your experience?; What do you feel when you think about the events described in the text? Focusing on the emotions of literary characters and audiences helps you to enter deeply into the situation depicted in the work. Moreover, it seems more meaningful than checking whether the student has memorized the appearances and quantities. Conscious identification of the nature of feelings helps one to approach difficult issues in a balanced way.

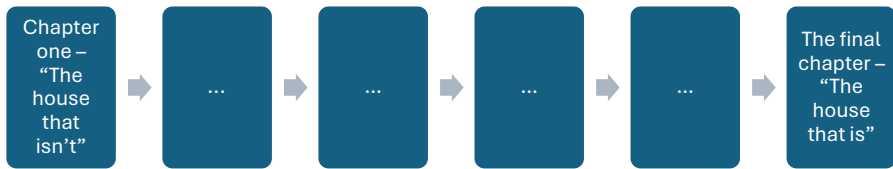
Figure 1. *Example of Questions for a Literary Work*

Questions related to the construction of the piece:	What does the protagonist/character look like?	What does he/she do?	Where does he/she live?	Where and when is the action set?
Questions related to reader reception:	What did the protagonist/character feel?	What do you think about his/her feelings?	What do you feel when you think about the events described in the text?	Do you know them from your experience?

The language we use to talk to children about difficult issues is also extremely important. The psychologist Dominika Słowikowska suggests “using literature or art tasks” (Gołota, 2022, p. 124). A hypersensitive, overly fearful or timid approach to difficult (taboo) subjects will then change; will be weakened by learning about and taming the problem. The desensitization I have in mind leads to a harmonious balanced reaction of the body to matters that may originally have been an over-stimulating signal.

The example of the war motif mentioned here may seem incomprehensible and quite distant to a modern child, even though he or she hears about it from the media or adult conversations. In contrast, the representation of war in the form of a literary work (story) serves to familiarise the child with the issues of war; to evoke sympathy and emotional togetherness with the characters in the work through bittersweet experiences. The literary message is aimed at the moral sensibility of the young viewer, which is already formed in the preschool period (Piaget, 1967). It is characterised by sensitivity to other people’s harm and a desire to help (Stachowicz-Zawiszewska, 2016). Works depicting the wartime fate of children and their families, on the one hand, influence the formation of children’s moral sphere as environmental factors, and, on the other hand, allow us to better understand their experiences. Talking to a child about events and feelings reveals his or her understanding of them and provides an overview of the ethical stance of the young reader.

For the educational activity, I chose a work published in 2016 entitled *Kot Karima i obrazki* [*Karim’s Cat and Pictures*] with illustrations by Anna Sędziwa, in which Liliana Bardijewska addressed the problem of the war in Syria. In an interesting story, the author introduces readers to the fate of the cat Biss and the Syrian boy Karim, who have to leave their own home together with their family. The author used the character of the cat to create a part of the narrative about the cat’s life, and, in this way, he achieved the effect of mixing happy and sad events. Watching people’s lives from the cat’s perspective abounds in many funny situations that may appeal to young readers, even though Biss, like humans, experiences wartime hardships. The family’s journey includes many poignant events, some of which Karim captures in his pictures. Their themes determine the composition of the piece, which begins ‘bitterly’: “The house that does not exist”, and ends ‘sweet’: “The house that exists”. This scheme is emphasised by the book’s front cover in which the illustrator has shown the characters’ journey in the form of a labyrinth leading from the burning building to the house in the orchard.

Figure 2. *The Composition of the Plot*

The theme of bittersweet emotions pervades the content of the entire work and is underlined by two types of narrative: one telling the story of the cat and the other of the family's struggle to cope with their wartime wandering¹. When Karim, the cat, the mother, and the grandmother arrive in Poland after a long journey, they are greeted by their Polish hosts. This moment evokes a particular bittersweet feeling:

They travel, they travel, they arrive. The town, the market, the river. A house across the river. Their house! A room, another room, a kitchen, a garden. In the garden – a rose, a pear tree, and an oak. And a stork's nest on a dry pine tree. In the windows – curtains. In the kitchen cupboards – plates and glasses. On the first floor – the neighbours. A real home! Mum cuddles Karim, Karim cuddles Biss, Grandma closes the door.

Shuffling, knocking – several women.

- I brought dinner – says one to Mum.
- And some cooking pots – says another to grandma.
- And books. Tomorrow I'll take you to school, says a girl in red slippers. They walk away. The door closes.
- They have really been waiting for us – says Mum.
- Upstairs – the clatter of red hard-soled slippers. And an angry male voice:
- Stay away from those vagabonds!
- Not everyone has been waiting – murmurs Biss.
- You can't pick grapes from thorns – murmurs Grandma.

Mum hugs Karim, Karim hugs Biss, Grandma wraps herself in hope. Thorn bushes also bear fruit, it's nothing that they are sour like lemons... (Bardijewska, 2016, pp. 84–85).

As part of the active method of working with the reading, I have suggested the creation of a board game to be implemented in groups. The inclusion of the board game in the children's activity is justified because of the important role of games in human life. This applies to adults and children alike, although games with an educational dimension, with a storyline 'for children', were initially not considered a material

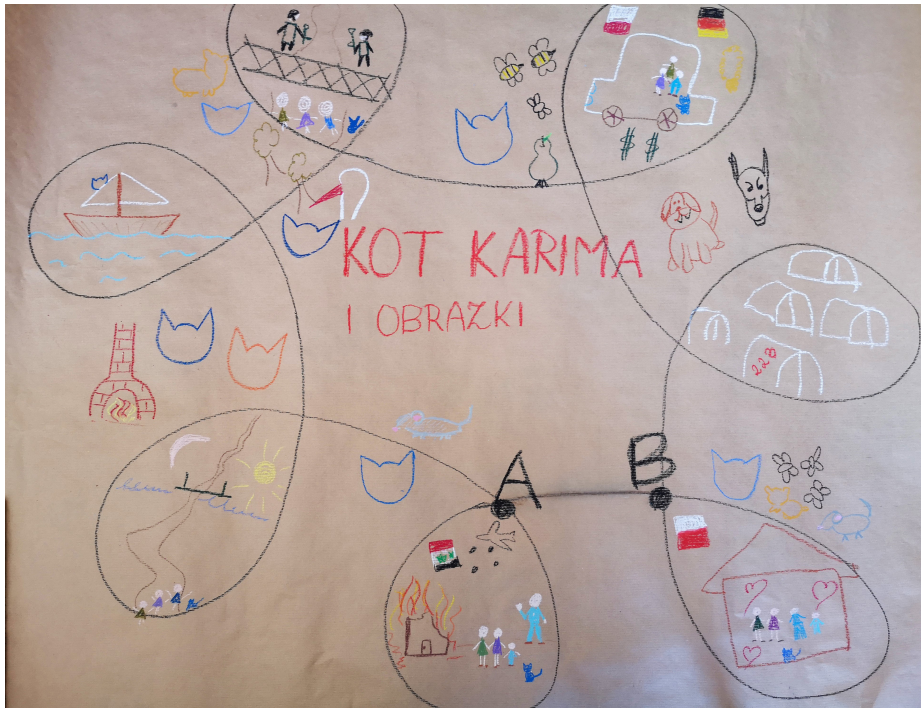
¹ This is also marked by the visual side of the book, which uses the bold font to describe the fate of people.

worthy of scientific description (Huizinga, 1967; Cieslikowski, 1985; Caillois, 1997; Kopoczek, 2013; Strzelecki, 2020).

Board games have long been used in early childhood education. Edyta Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska has written about their important role, pointing out the advantages of ready-made games and the art of constructing them (Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska et al., 1996). The researcher focuses mainly on teaching mathematics, but rightly emphasises that games are well suited to the development of intellectual skills and the shaping of children's emotional resilience (Korolczuk & Zambrowska, 2014, pp. 18–19). The need to cope with a task strengthens the emotional sensitivity of game participants, and the pursuit of a goal gives them satisfaction. While Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska writes about fostering talents through game participation, Monika Węglorz-Masłowska (2021) emphasises strengthening the cognitive abilities of students with mild intellectual disabilities. As Jacek Francikowski writes, “games are also educationally valuable because of the authenticity of the experiences they offer, activating students, inducing a sense of agency in them, shaping their social and other soft skills, and activating deeper levels of information processing” (Francikowski, 2018, p. 34).

The course of the class involved dividing the team into four groups of several students. They had previously read the content of the work, and their task was to find the most important moments in the characters' lives in the story's plot and arrange them in the chronological order. After each group had read out their prepared 'plans,' the students were tasked with presenting the plot of the work in the form of a line on which the most important events were to be marked schematically. Each group worked on a sheet of grey paper using crayons.

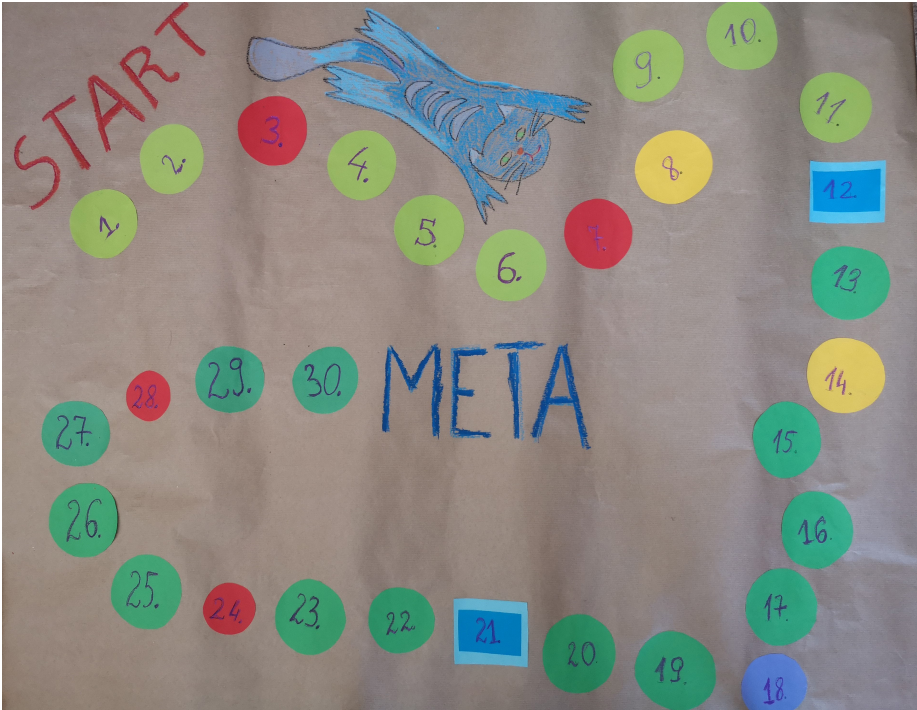
Figure 3. Example of a Plot Diagram



The next stage was to create a board game based on the plot of Bardijewska's work.

The pupils identified positive and negative events; then they assigned specific behaviours to the participants. Guided by a pre-prepared 'plan' and a picture of the plot, each group drew their own game according to the instructions they had developed.

As a result of this work, the class team prepared four board games with instructions. In the next step, the participants played their games by throwing dice and aimed at a goal (just like the characters in the work did). In the following activities, the students could play the games prepared in other groups.

Figure 4. *An Example of a Board Game*

The aim of working with the text in this way was to involve all the children in learning about the content and responding to it in ethical terms. Among the didactic objectives achieved are:

- developing the ability to distinguish elements of the plot in the reading,
- making the audience aware that the plot of a work is linear and has the shape of a movement pattern (Ungeheuer-Gołab, 2009) – it begins at place A and ends at B;
- shaping the processes of analysis and synthesis as a result of selecting and evaluating the events occurring in the work;
- becoming familiar with the modern way of narrating in a children's prose piece with two modes of narration;
- improving logical thinking by constructing instructions for a game based on the plot of the work;
- shaping the ability to determine the meaning of the piece by preparing artwork, instructions and a game board, and by participating in the game.

Working in groups provided the opportunity for students to interact and come to a joint conclusion. This activity allowed all the students to be fully involved. It made

them realise that their action related to the literary text resulted in a specific product, which is important for further learning and play.

The repertoire of ready-made board games is quite wide, most of them having varied themes, but they are unlikely to relate to specific children's literary works, especially those with taboo themes (Januszewski, 2017). The use of such a method allows, on the one hand, to expose children to a difficult topic, and on the other hand, it occupies their attention, teaches them concentration and a creative approach. The necessity to create a game plan requires the student to consciously consider the ethical dimension of the plot events, to evaluate the actions of characters, and to acquire an emotional attitude to the story.

Closing Remarks

In the offer of Polish books for early school-age children, one can find important titles that deal with war themes. These works have a high literary and artistic value, are often enriched with artistic illustrations, and some of them even have the form of picture books. The works collected here cover a wide variety of issues related to the war and would require a separate discussion. I cite them here only as examples of titles to which it is worth drawing the attention of the readers. These include:

- *Czy wojna jest dla dziewczyn?* [*Is War for Girls?*], Paweł Beręsewicz, illustrated by Olga Reszelska.
- *Kot Karima i obrazki* [*Karim's Cat and Pictures*], Liliana Bardijewska, illustrated by Anna Sędziwy.
- *Mała wojna* [*Little War*], Katarzyna Ryry, illustrated by Joanna Rusinek.
- *Moje cudowne dzieciństwo w Aleppo* [*My Miraculous Childhood in Aleppo*], Grzegorz Gortat, illustrated by Marianna Sztyma.
- *Mój tata szczęściarz* [*My Lucky Dad*], Joanna Papuzińska, illustrated by Maciej Szymanowicz.
- *Otto. Autobiografia pluszowego Misia* [*Otto. The Autobiography of a Teddy Bear*], Tomi Ungerer.
- *Pamiętnik Blumki* [*Blumka's Diary*], Iwona Chmielewska.
- *Pan Apoteker* [*Mr Apoteker*], Katarzyna Rydy, illustrated by Katarzyna Ryrych.
- *Podróż* [*The Journey*], Francesca Sanna.
- *Syberyjskie przygody chmurki* [*The Siberian Adventures of a Little Cloud*], Dorota Combrzyńska-Nogala, illustrated by Maciej Szymanowicz.
- *Teraz tu jest nasz dom* [*Now Here Is Our Home*], Barbara Gawryluk, illustrated by Maciej Szymanowicz.

- *Wojna* [War], José Jorge Letria, illustrated by André Letria, translated by Katarzyna Okrasko.
- *Wróg* [The Enemy], Davide Cali, illustrated by Serge Bloch.
- *Wszystkie moje mamy* [All My Mums], Renata Piątkowska, illustrated by Maciej Szymanowicz.
- *Zaklęcie na „w”* [A „W” Spell], Michał Rusinek, illustrated by Joanna Rusinek.

The publications listed above are an interesting reading list on the subject of war, for which there is no time during school lessons. Each of the stories presented in them is a reason to talk about struggling with wartime life, about how human fate can change under the influence of complete strangers, but not only, as they are also stories which, thanks to their content and artistic form, evoke important feelings necessary for shaping empathy and cooperation skills in children. All these works were written not only to tell children about the war. I believe that their overarching purpose is to promote and maintain peace. Introducing young readers to the human fate during the war and the suffering associated with it becomes a remedy to a lack of sensitivity, but also a cure for the hypersensitive person who does not take the right stance due to excessive fear. When educating and teaching children, it is necessary to constantly bear in mind the need for empathy, which is gained by understanding and mastering one's own hypersensitive reactions derived from fear, grief, disgust, thanks to the bitersweet experiences resulting from contact with art.

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