Images from www.rutahsa.com
‘When we are flying kites, the string is a symbol of life being flown up into heaven, so that there is a contact between the heart of the earth and the heart of heaven. It doesn’t represent the life of one person, but the lives of many people’ (Maya spiritual leader, quoted in Ornelas, *Wings of Resistance*).
Polynesian Kite

Teizo Hashimoto kite representing Kintaro and carp

← *Kite Flying* by Suzuki Harunobu, 1766 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City)
Their kites ‘frame the way that history’ – their history – is being written. Drawing upon Susan Sontag’s discussion of Holocaust photographs in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Picador, 2003), we could conclude that, ‘rather than reinforcing the narrative “of death, of failure, of victimization,” these kites “invoke the miracle of survival”’ (Ornelas).
• Part One: Adapting Death for Changing Contexts
• Part Two: Ritualizing Death and Life After Death
• Part Three: Politicizing Death
• Part Four: Picturing Death
• Part Five: Metaphorizing Death
• Part Six: Playing with Death
THEME #1

ROLE OF MENTORS OR ELDERS

Guatemalan barrileteros (master kite makers)
Boy, no one could do anything to me ...
Chapter 1
Daniel Pinti,
‘Thus did hearth-companions grieve their lord’s fall’: Death, Mourning, and the Children’s Beowulf
Beowulf:

‘Death is no terrible thing for one who has lived well.’

‘What one sees in various but striking ways in contemporary versions of *Beowulf* for young readers are opportunities to imagine personal and cultural mourning, whether it be in terms of denial, celebration, or critique’ (Pinti).
Chapter 2

Ginger Stelle,

Loyalty, Honor, and Death in Rick Riordan’s *Olympus* Series
Modern fairy tales ...

**THEME #2**

PLASTICITY OF BELIEFS, TRADITIONS, AND RITUALS

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Chapter 14: Maria Luisa Alonso, ‘Michael Ende’s Philosophy of Death, Life, and Time’

← Michael Ende’s *Momo* (1973) and *Die unendliche Geschichte* [The Neverending Story] (1979)


‘The historical evolution of storytelling reflects struggles of human beings worldwide to adapt to their changing natural and social environments’ (Zipes).

Being ‘derived largely from collective efforts, … these stories circulate in multiple versions, reconfigured by each telling to form kaleidoscopic variations with distinctly different effects’ (Tatar).
Chapter 3
Margarita Georgieva,
A Deathly Underworld: Bulgarian Literature for Children of the Early Twentieth Century
Elin Pelin, Yan Bibiyan: The Incredible Adventures of a Kid (1933)

&

Nikolai Rainov, ‘Kingdom of the Samodivas,’ Bulgarian Tales (1933)
Chapter 7: Urvi Mukhopadhyay, From Ultimate Punishment to Heroic Sacrifice, and After: Representations of Death in Bengali Children’s Literature from the Colonial Era

Chapter 8: Julie K. deGraffenried, A New Normal: Death and Dying in a Soviet Children’s Magazine, 1941-1945

Chapter 9: Susana S. Martínez, Contemporary Coming of Age(nCy): Narratives of Political Violence and Death in El Salvador and Guatemala: ‘So that future generations may be aware’
Chapter 7

Urvi Mukhopadhyay,

From Ultimate Punishment to Heroic Sacrifice, and After: Representations of Death in Bengali Children’s Literature from the Colonial Era

← Iswarchandra Vidyasagar’s Varnapurichay [Introduction to the Alphabet] (1855)
Stories by Ray Choudhury & Sukumar Ray

Ray Choudhury, ‘Sheyal Pandit’ ['The Scholarly Fox'] (1910)

Satiric images by Sukumar Ray from the 1920s
The sacred ‘must always be subject to questioning, deconstruction, even to declarations of their obsolescence. To respect the sacred is to be paralysed by it’ (Rushdie).

‘Ironically, however, seventy years later, with female foeticide and child abuse still rampant, the connection between death and children in Bengali culture is as relevant now as it was one hundred and two hundred years ago. It is time for Bengali children’s literature to enter the fray in ways that reflect social realities – or, in the spirit of Sukumar Ray, to debunk them’ (Mukhopadhyay).
THEME #3
NEGOTIATION
OF THE
CONUNDRUM
THAT DEATH
CAN NEVER BE
SEEN AND
HENCE NEVER
REPRESENTED

Woodcut illustration, Mitra
Majumdar’s *Thakurmar Jhuli*
*[Grandma’s Bag of Tales]*
(1907)

Maya Glyphs
Chapter 10
Lesley D. Clement, The Last Resort: Death and Liminality in Children’s Picture Books on Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson, ‘Because I could not stop for Death – / He kindly stopped for me’ (illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault, My Letter to the World and Other Poems, KCP Poetry, 2008)
Illustrations by Gary Kelley in Jane Yolen’s *The Emily Sonnets: The Life of Emily Dickinson* (Creative Editions, 2012)
Chapter 11

Penni Cotton,

Old Age and Death in Northern European Picture Books: Achieving Empathy through Textual and Filmic Images of Sweden’s Kan du Vissla Johanna

Physical Artifact → Concrete Memory

Chapter 12

Magdalena Sikorska & Katarzyna Smyczyńska

Visual Narratives of Death and Memory: The Holocaust in Two Contemporary European Picture Books

2011

2008
THEME #4

WHAT DEATH REPRESENTS METAPHORICALLY

Because ‘death cannot be represented ... the analysis of it must show not only how it claims to represent death, but also what else it in fact represents, however suppressed: assertion of alternative power, self-referential metaphor, aggression against individuals or groups, formation of group identities and ideologies, and so forth’ (Elisabeth Bronfen and Sarah Goodwin, introduction to Death and Representation, Johns Hopkins UP, 1993).

*Kite Boy*, from the studio of Stasia Burrington
stasiaburrington.com
Chapter 4

Hossein Sheykh Rezaee, with other members of the research group of the Children’s Book Council of Iran,

Holy Death: Constructions of Martyrdom in Persian Children’s Literature on the Eight-Year War between Iraq and Iran

Samad Behrangi, *Maahi siyah-e kuchulu* [The Little Black Fish] (1968)

‘The symbolic universes used to legitimate martyrdom have become increasingly sophisticated’; ‘some writers have tried to confront their readers with death as an unpleasant phenomenon’ (Rezaee et al.).
THEME #5

ACTIVE ROLE THAT CHILDREN CAN PLAY & ARE ENCOURAGED TO PLAY IN FRAMING THEIR OWN PERCEPTIONS OF & RESPONSES TO DEATH

A Kite
I often sit and wish that I Could be a kite up in the sky, And ride upon the breeze and go Whichever way I chanced to blow. 

Author Unknown
Chapter 8

Julie deGraffenried,

A New Normal: Death and Dying in a Soviet Children’s Magazine, 1941-1945

Double-spread illustration by A. Shishov, ‘V razvedke’ ['On Reconnaissance'], *Murzilka* (July 1942)
‘In the latter years of the war, gaps in the messages about war, death, and dying appeared, allowing the child reader ample opportunity to manipulate messages conveyed by conflicting images and texts for personal purposes’ (deGraffenried).
Chapter 9

Susana Martínez,

Contemporary Coming of Age(n.cy): Narratives of Political Violence and Death in El Salvador and Guatemala, ‘So that future generations may be aware’
From the Ecological to the Digital: Salman Rushdie’s Many Lives of Storytelling

‘Thus this new form of interaction provides a platform for storytelling to augment continually its multiple lives’ (Weiser).
'This death is made possible – and, in fact, is delivered – through child’s play’ (Tan).
Chapter 18

Markus P.J. Bohlmann, Machinic Liaisons: Death’s Dance with Children in Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief*
THEME #6

LITERATURE INCORPORATING DEATH ENHANCES CHILDREN’S SENSE OF COMMUNITY – PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE

6000 Palestinian children in northern Gaza attempting to break world record in UN-sponsored event (The Telegraph)
‘The experience of consensual death becomes, paradoxically, a testimony to childhood’s vital, resilient force that remains unaltered in the presence of destruction. In their playful unconcern regarding the worst and in their blunt mockery of death, children do not avoid or reject death but, conversely, incorporate it in the course of life itself, as something that simply occurs at the end of each stanza. Life and death are not antagonists after all, but neighboring dimensions that can suddenly come into contact through a coincidence of sounds. That nothing more than a rhyme might be enough to bring life and death together is the powerful truth that children whisper to us through the Tangolomango’ (Bines).
Children fly kites at a cemetery, against backdrop of the Volcan del Agua [Water Volcano], during the Day of the Dead celebrations in Santa Maria de Jesus, Guatemala. www.dailymail.co.uk
THE 3R’S
RESOURCEFULNESS
RESILIENCE
RESISTANCE

Tangled, from the studio of Stasia Burrington
stasiaburrington.com