

Slide 1



Slide 2



Slide 3



Show & Tell

One item to share

- an object, a quote, a poem, an illustration or whatever
- needs only to be meaningful to the teller and carry a story the teller want to tell

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Slide 4



A cheese house

From the cupboard
to the breakfast table

The men's boarding house

A grandmother's gift
a granddaughter treasures

~~Michelle Johnson~~

NZARE 2022 4



A cheese house
From the cupboard
to the breakfast table
The men's boarding
house
A grandmother's gift
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treasures

Ko Michelle Johnson ahau

This ceramic cheese house can also be used as a butter house and it was made in England in the 1940's. Behind the ceramic house is a link between my early childhood and my nana. I need to set the stage to explain the context before I come to the ceramic house.

Before I was born my grandmother owned a number of boarding houses. It was around the 1940's there was a huge demand for residential housing in Auckland and other main centres around New Zealand. The demand for accommodation was fuelled by shortages of timber for new housing and soldiers returning from WW2 as well as growth in industry.

It was during this period that my nana's father passed away, and she and her sisters received a small inheritance. With a mortgage from the bank, she purchased a property on Great North road Grey Lyn and let rooms to singles and couples charging a weekly board that included breakfast and dinner.

My grandfather owned and ran a second-hand book shop on Great North road and Nana ran the boarding house. They lived above the bookshop and I think it's fair to say that nana considered herself a 'business woman.'

It was in 1962 that my grandfather died and this was also the year that I was born in London. Nana was grieving and she wanted her daughter and new granddaughter home. She purchased a 5-bedroom home for herself in Epsom and although she still let rooms to single men and ran it as a boarding house she set aside space for mum and I. She decorated a baby room for me and I think the anticipation of having us live with her helped her through that period of grief for granddads passing. Mum and I lived with nana and the male boarders ranging in age from 20 – 65 for the first five years of my life. When I look back its hard to imagine coming and going within one house with 6 or 7 people with only one toilet and one bathroom.

The cheese house.

Every night Nana would be the last person to get to bed, she would stay up late to tidy up the kitchen and set the table for the men's breakfast the next day. I loved to stay up late too to help Nana and I would chatter or sing to nana as we worked. Nana was big on 'appearances' and milk was always decanted into a milk jug, the jam selections were dolloped onto jam dishes with jam spoons and butter or cheese had pride of place in the ceramic house. Living in the boarding house, we had a big back garden but very few children's toys. So, the little house captured my imagination, I loved the 'cheese house' as I called it, I imagined living in the rose-covered cottage (not a boarding house). Nana used to often say that one day when she died I could have the cheese house and this would make me sad – as I couldn't imagine my life without my nana.

I was very close to nana and her influence has shaped aspects of my life today. She continued to take a great interest in my life until her death and I mourned her passing for a long time. While her legacy comprises far more than this ceramic cheese house this is something tangible that I treasure and will always remind me of nana.

Reflecting on our notions of literacy.

I think that like most of us I have gone down the path of placing reading and writing in the foreground and perhaps unintentionally placed oral language traditions in the background. When we place literacy in a box or anything in a box for that matter – we narrow and constrain.

There is a quote by Albert Einstein that is applicable to every context and especially for those of us in the early childhood sector

– **“Experience is knowledge – everything else is information.”**

While I had some understanding of oral language traditions from historical or cultural perspectives prior to our 'unboxing' session it became a personal experience that I was invited to participate in.

I listened to the personal stories of others in our group and then added my own story. Each person's story stood alone, until Jakoba took elements from each story and wove them together. In this way she unified us all, each person's story was valued and woven into the poem to create just one piece of work.

How has the unboxing of literacies changed my notion of literacy?

I feel that the unboxing of literacies experience has widened my perception of literacy to appreciate the richness of our shared narratives. To reflect on how I can be more attentive to children's narratives. To ask student teachers to reflect on their own engagement in active listening, to understand the importance of being in the moment so that they really listen to children in conversations. And to ask good questions to encourage and provoke children to engage in conversations and share stories. To think about how we can place greater value on children's personal narratives and empower them to become the authors of their own stories.

Thank you.