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SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

PORTRAYAL OF HIV/AIDS IN SELECTED CHILDREN’S STORIES IN KENYA: A STUDY OF LOVE LASTS FOREVER, KESANI GIVES ADVICE AND FINA THE DANCER.

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portrayal of
HIV/AIDS in selected
DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University or for any other award.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Sarah Tonui Chepkurui, and my parents, Alice Kirui Cherono and Reuben Kirui.
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ABSTRACT

This study is an investigation of how the theme of HIV/AIDS is portrayed in selected children’s stories published in Kenya. These selected texts are David Mulwa’s Love Lasts Forever, Lorna Muhirwe’s Kesani Gives Advice and David Njeng’ere’s Fina the Dancer. The books are published under the title ‘Junior Lifesavers Series’ by Longhorn Publishers to aid primary school children comprehend the causes, spread and impact of HIV/AIDS. The study is based on questionnaires collected from the children and library research.

The study has determined how children respond to the depiction of the theme of HIV/AIDS. The study ascertains that children realize that HIV/AIDS spreads due to involvement in promiscuity, use of infected sharp objects and involvement in drug abuse where the users share needles. During child birth, a mother may also pass the disease to her unborn child. The spread of the disease again is fuelled by the sexual exploitation of minors and young girls by older men who take advantage of the girls’ naivety and desire for basic needs to involve them in sex for money, consequently infecting them with HIV/AIDS. In addition, this critical work has shown the economic, social and psychological consequences of HIV/AIDS that the children identified. Besides, it was found out in the study that the authors of the selected fiction ingeniously use language devices to depict the sensitive theme of HIV/AIDS. This is achieved through use of plot and pacifying themes for cathartic effect. This critical work also identified some shortcomings in the selected texts that hindered children from comprehending appropriate themes. These shortcomings are an inappropriate exploitation of descriptions and
illustrations. Also, the use of symbolism and satire failed to communicate the intended meanings because of the failure by the children to decipher them. The study concludes with the recommendations that may aid society to fight the onslaught of the HIV/AIDS scourge.

The study uses the Reader Response Theory and Stylistic Criticism to analyse the literary presentation of the causes, spread and impact of HIV/AIDS in the selected children’s texts.
OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The following are definitions of key working terms employed in this study:

A Child: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children defines a child as a human being who has attained the school going age of six years but is still under eighteen years and dependant on his parents or guardians. For this study, we consider school-aged children as between age 10 to 15 years. This is the average age of upper primary school children in Kenya.

Bibliotherapy: Miller (in Positive Child Guidance) defines the term as “the process of using books to help children think about, understand, and work through social and emotional concerns…and in preventing and resolving behaviour problems”.

Catharsis: Catharsis refers to the purging of emotions after an overwhelming vicarious experience. This can occur after watching a play or reading a story.

Hedo-palliative: The relief of emotional distress because of reading or watching a work of fiction or drama where hedonic-narrative (pacifying) dynamics are present. This results in cleansing of emotions.

ACRONYMS AND SHORTENED TERMS

HIV: (Human immunodeficiency virus). The virus that destroys the human immune system, eventually causing AIDS.
AIDS: (Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). A condition in which HIV progressively destroys the immune system, leading to opportunistic infections.

**Fina:** Fina the Dancer by David Njeng’ere.

**Kesani:** Kesani Gives Advice by Lorna Muhirwe

**Love:** Love Lasts Forever by David Mulwa.
CHAPTER ONE

1.0. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Literature has always played a central role in human affairs. Several critics acknowledge the distinguished role that literature performs. In an online article, Baffour - Awuah ("The Fight against HIV/AIDS") argues that literature inculcates society with social values and norms, through purposive characterization, where the characters embody particular shared ideals that the writer wishes to support or condemn. Olen (134-143) also demonstrates how children's literature acts as a positive force to fight against social evils and transform society into a better place to live in. Olen focuses on uses of literature to combat negative values. She shows how literature was used to battle apartheid, which was a dominant ideology in the then white ruled South Africa, before elections in 1994 ushered in a majority black rule. Ganz (119-120) concludes that good, creative and inspiring literature should embody positive communal values, enlightens and generally inform a young reader. Ngugi Wa Thiongo (5-6) echoes the same tenet that creative writers must always be at the forefront of sensitizing society about any emerging issues threatening the survival of that society. Ngugi takes the opinion that at the societal level, literature is a creation of people's intellectual and creative undertakings; and it depicts society's tensions, conflicts and contradictions, which are at the core of community's fashioning of its identity. Ngugi concludes that the ultimate purpose of literature is to mould people's perspective on life as they engage daily with nature, the everyday tussles within the community itself, and the exertions within the individuals in the process of becoming. Lastly, Townsend (60) opines that literature offers pleasure of an intense kind where
the art enriches and modifies a reader’s life, imagination and perception of events.

The critics mentioned above depict the significant role that literature performs. Kenyan fiction has also been concerned with the theme of HIV/AIDS as it weaves a trail of devastation on society. Yusuf Dawood’s novel, Water under the Bridge (1991), traces the history of an Asian, African and European family in postcolonial Kenya. The theme of HIV/AIDS is referred to when Hugh, a promiscuous character in the novel, dies of a new disease in Nairobi. The mysterious disease is HIV/AIDS. In Nice People (1992) Geteria Wamugunda is concerned with the medical and socio-sexual factors that spread sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. These include economic might and erosion of morality that enable people to buy and sell sex unencumbered by restriction of marriage. These factors favour the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

Carolyne Adalla’s Confessions of an AIDS Victim (1993) depicts the experience of being infected with HIV/AIDS as a catastrophic event that threatens one’s physical and social identity. In Confessions the narrator decides to go public about her positive HIV status. Confessions is centered Catherine’s crumbling world because of her discovery that she is HIV positive and her past life exemplified by escapades of love, sex and pregnancy. She tests positive for HIV/AIDS after undergoing screening as part of the procedure before going abroad for further studies. The narrative in Confessions centre on two confessions: The confession of the discovery that Catherine is HIV positive and the confession of the probable circumstances that made her HIV positive. Through her confessions, she narrates her recollections of childhood, adolescence, first love encounter, university education, her numerous intimate relationships and her parenthood. In the process she narrates that
her infection was due to her inability to access sex education, skewed gender relations that discriminated against women, failure to comprehend her sexuality and a lack of parental guidance throughout her life. She presents these circumstances as explanations for the eventual infection with HIV.

Margaret Ogola’s novel The River and the Source (1994) blends in it a tale of a family history across three generations of women together with the issue of HIV/AIDS. The novel interrogates several themes including position of women in society, infidelity, prostitution, marriage and courtship, intertribal marriages and religion. The theme of HIV/AIDS is depicted through Becky, a female character, who flees her home to avoid parental control by her father. Becky’s extreme desire for material possessions leads her to infidelity and promiscuity. This eventually destroys her marriage to a Canadian pilot whom she met while working as an airhostess in Nairobi. Becky eventually was infected with HIV/AIDS and succumbed to opportunistic infections associated with the illness.

Macharia Mwangi’s short story “Reversed Dreams” (1997) depicts the tension, confusion and anxiety that face people in an intimate relationship when a partner tests positive with HIV/AIDS. Mwangi offers insight into the expectations and hopes that men and women hold for each other in intimates relationships and the danger that HIV/AIDS poses in such relationships. The author seems to suggest that sexual passions should not override people’s need to be cautious before engaging in sexual unions as infection with HIV may even result from just a single sexual encounter. “Reversed Dreams” begins and ends with a sense of doom. The story begins with Munga in a trance dreaming that he is being tormented in hell. As the story ends Munga is still in a dazed state overwhelmed by his actions. He has just
made love to Salome, his girlfriend, and he is tormented that he may have just then infected her with the HIV virus as they made love thus destroying her and the future of Salome’s infant child.

Other writers whose works fall under the category of HIV/AIDS fiction are Meja Mwangi and Marjorie Oludhe. Macgoye in Chira (1997) explores issues such as struggle for survival in the challenging urban environment of Nairobi and the HIV/AIDS phenomenon and how it is interpreted from both medical and socio-cultural perspectives in Kenya. The author suggests that the concept of Chira, a cultural belief among the Luo community, is used positively to help people cope with a new phenomenon (HIV/AIDS) in their community by contextualizing HIV/AIDS within a recognizable cultural environment and as a result provides a means of dealing with the scourge. At the same time, Chira is also employed to deny the existence of the disease and this may have disastrous consequences.

On the other hand HIV/AIDS pandemic is vividly portrayed in Meja Mwangi’s The Last Plague (2000). The novel investigates some of the cultural, social, economic and political factors that seem to fuel the spread of HIV/AIDS in Kenya. The author seems to suggest that promiscuity can lead to HIV/AIDS and even death. Broker, a character in the novel, was promiscuous and got infected and consequently he is alienated from sexual intimacy with Janet, his wife. It is noteworthy that Janet is a HIV/AIDS crusader as she distributes condoms in an attempt to halt the spread of the disease. Despite her noble task, Janet’s efforts are frustrated by resistance from men and suspicion from women. Her efforts to make women to use birth control pills, discuss safer sex with their husbands and to get the men to use condoms are frustrated by the existing traditional ideas of sex, sexuality and gender held by the people of
Crossroads

The contributions mentioned above depicts the catastrophic effects of HIV/AIDS on Kenyan society and also the role that fiction can play in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The fiction mentioned above raises disturbing questions about human relationships ranging from sex, gender, sexuality, marriage, prostitution, widowhood, single parenthood, love and romance and erosion of morality. However, all these issues are addressed from an adult perspective.

1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Ever since the emergence of HIV/AIDS as a phenomenon, humanity has sought various strategies of coping with the unique challenges that the disease causes. Among the approaches identified is the use of fiction to mitigate the onslaught of HIV/AIDS. Children’s literature in Kenya has not been left behind in exploiting the numerous opportunities that fiction offers to allay the calamities caused by HIV/AIDS. Creative writers and publishers have therefore released a large collection of literary works meant for children on the theme of HIV/AIDS. This emerging field of fictional works has received scant criticism from literary scholars. It is hence critical to study selected children’s literary writings on HIV/AIDS. This is to establish if the themes depicted in the texts are suitable for children.

Again, portrayal of HIV/AIDS is challenging to children’s creative writers because it is a gory and sensitive topic to growing children. We therefore examine how the authors of the selected texts portray the gruesome and delicate subject of HIV/AIDS, in a manner that does not offend children and society. Additionally, we
explore some of the shortcomings that may have made the children not to comprehend appropriate themes in the selected texts.

1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is guided by the following objectives:

a) To investigate how children respond to depictions of HIV/AIDS in the selected literary works.

b) To analyse the devices that aid children comprehend the presentation of the gory and sensitive subject of HIV/AIDS in the selected literary works.

c) To examine the devices that are not conducive in aiding children comprehend the gruesome theme of HIV/AIDS.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The key research questions are:

a) How do children respond to depictions of HIV/AIDS in the selected literary works?

b) Which literary strategies help children to comprehend the presentation of the horrific and sensitive subject of HIV/AIDS in the selected literary works?

c) Which devices hinder children from comprehending the dreadful theme of HIV/AIDS in the selected literary works?
1.4. RESEARCH PREMISES

The following assumptions have guided this study:

a) Children either criticised or affirmed some values associated with the depiction of HIV/AIDS in the selected literary works.

b) Certain devices are crucial in helping children comprehend the presentation of the horrendous and sensitive subject of HIV/AIDS in the selected literary works.

c) Certain literary strategies cannot aid children to comprehend the ghastly theme of HIV/AIDS in the selected texts.

1.5. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Literature is a vital measure identified as providing options in an artistic manner on how to mitigate the adverse consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Several literary works on HIV/AIDS have emerged worldwide, in this endeavour.

In Kenya, the writing and publishing of children’s fiction on HIV/AIDS is a growing field and analysis of this literature is necessary. Specifically, the contributions of children’s literature in combating the HIV/AIDS scourge have been studied in this project. This was to determine perceptions of children to depictions of HIV/AIDS in literary works.

An appraisal of some literary strategies in the selected works is crucial in deducing how distinctive literary strategies enable writers to present the horrifying and delicate subject of HIV/AIDS in literary works. We explore how HIV/AIDS is depicted without hurting the delicate nature of the children who are still undergoing
bodily growth and mental development.

The study focuses on three texts selected through random sampling. All titles in the series qualified for the study. However, the methodology suggested here only allows for exhaustive scrutiny of three titles. These are David Mulwa’s Love Lasts Forever, Lorna Muhirwe’s Kesani Gives Advice and David Njeng’ere’s Fina the Dancer. The books were selected due to their thematic content. They deal with the theme of HIV/AIDS. The selection of the texts was further based on their suitable readership that is between ages 10 and 15. This age group was deemed appropriate for the research based on their rate of physical growth and intellectual development.

For this study, only children aged between ten and fifteen years were involved in the fieldwork. This is the average age of upper primary school children in Kenya. Psychologist Jean Piaget’s ideas were also influential in determining the category to interview. In his theory of developmental stages (The Moral Judgment of a Child, 1932) he argues that young children's reasoning and understanding models are different from those of adults. Jean Piaget further categorizes individual children’s thought and understanding models into separate stages at particular levels of development. He identifies ages 7-11 as concrete operational stage where children’s thinking patterns are logical and concrete. He additionally affirms that children can at this age retain and utilise logic in their thoughts, but only if they have practical aids. From ages 11 to 15, Piaget calls formal operational stage characterized by use of abstract reasoning, logical thinking and retention of what is read. These ideas influenced this research as the children randomly selected to participate in the reading of the texts studied, retained and synthesized the information they learned to enable them answer the questionnaire.
The findings in this research project may also benefit editors and publishers of children's fiction on HIV/AIDS. They will have access to research on what children require in the category of literary texts focusing on HIV/AIDS.

1.6. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on the representation of the theme of HIV/AIDS in David Mulwa's Love Lasts Forever, Lorna Muhirwe's Kesani Gives Advice and David Njengere's Fina the Dancer. The focus on these texts is on how children perceive their depiction of the theme of HIV/AIDS. The children's responses are of paramount importance. Their perception is under scrutiny to determine what appeals or does not appeal to them in the selected texts and why this is so. The research project involved only upper primary pupils (class five to eight) from three schools in Sotik District and a school each from Thika District and Nairobi. These schools are Manaret, St. Theresa and Ndanai Primary Schools in Sotik District. The other schools are Wankan in Ruiru, Thika District and Emmanuel Church Academy in Kawangware (a slum settlement in Nairobi). The schools were selected for demonstrative purposes only.

The data consists of samples from both a rural and a cosmopolitan part of Kenya. Therefore, the data cannot wholly be representative or predictive of the reactions of all Kenyan pupils in relation to the theme of HIV/AIDS. However, the results of the investigation shed light on how pupils in upper primary schools in Kenya view the depiction of HIV/AIDS in selected children's fiction. Sotik District was selected because of ease in carrying out the research. It was easily accessible to the researcher. The district was also chosen to give a rural outlook on the topic of
investigation. The schools in Thika and Nairobi were chosen to provide a cosmopolitan outlook.

Carrying out a research assignment is a challenging task due to unforeseen circumstances. During the duration of the research, I faced challenges like the dear cost of purchasing the texts used for the study. In addition, some of the pupils kept the books for themselves after they had finished reading, while other texts were torn during the reading process; consequently necessitating the acquisition of new reading material. Additional resources were obtained to ensure the accomplishment of the undertaking. I also encountered obstacles like lack of adequate time for the study because the research took place during official working days. I was then obligated to seek permission to be away from my official duties to attend to the research. Again, interviewing children is a complex duty because they are generally wary of strangers. Nevertheless, this obstacle was surmounted by seeking the assistance and physical presence of a familiar teacher from the schools where the data was being collected. The steps I took to overcome the obstacles mentioned ensured the success of the research assignment.

1.7. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cass in the text Literature and the Young Children (1961) looks at the role of characterization in children’s texts. He argues that characterization shapes children’s perception of others and the society they live in. Characterisation also shapes children’s behaviour, life experiences and motivation for their daily life. However, the theme of HIV/AIDS had not emerged by the time the work was published.
Nevertheless, this research has drawn from Cass by focusing on how the selected texts enrich children’s perceptions on HIV/AIDS.

Kingston in the book *The Tragic Mode in Children Writers* (1974) dwells on the necessity of tragedy in children’s writings. He presumes that tragedy should play a purgative role in children’s writings, just as it does in fiction meant for adults. Kingston illustrates the uses of tragedy at different levels of childhood thus providing useful guidelines for writers. Although Kingston’s work does not focus on HIV/AIDS because it had not emerged by then, his findings are useful in this research project as we consider how children find cathartic relief by reading the selected books.

Dixon’s book, *Catching them Young* (1977), critically focuses on ideas, attitudes and opinions conveyed by authors of children’s fiction. The book demonstrates that illustrations, comics, novels and stories may at times be anti-social and anti-human. Dixon, through practical analysis of selected texts, provides an illuminating guideline for those selecting and buying books for children. Dixon’s views enriched this research work as we focused on any negative views on perceptions of HIV/AIDS the children may have picked from the selected texts. The views suggested by the findings from the study may aid those selecting books for children and even publishers by providing a criterion that may help in choice of appropriate books on the theme of HIV/AIDS.

On the Kenyan literary scene, scholars have carried out general studies on children’s literature. P’Bitek’s seminal work, *African Cultural Revolution* (1973), voices the argument that literature should build strong indigenous cultures. Though the work is too broad and general in its portrayal of the Kenyan context, its
prescriptions are useful in these times of HIV/AIDS crisis to reflect on positive aspects of African traditions that have been eroded by rising urbanization and individualism. These values can ease the suffering associated with HIV/AIDS. We therefore examine some positive values that the children identified from the selected texts in this research work. Society views these ideals as worth retaining.

Odaga (Literature for Children and Young People in Kenya, first published in 1974, and later reissued in 1985) gives an overview of literature for young people and children in Kenya. While the work is part of pioneer studies on children’s literature in Kenya, emerging themes such as HIV/AIDS had not yet arisen. This enquiry fills this gap.

Mwanzi (“Children’s Literature in Kenya”, 1982) carries out a critical analysis of selected children’s literary prose. She highlights three categories of fiction. These are Eurocentric, Colonialist and Kenyan. She deduces that images in children’s literary prose persuade the children to have certain worldviews. Mwanzi identifies that some of the children she interviewed had a Western concept of beauty where white is considered more beautiful than black. She challenges writers of children’s fiction, and those who prescribe books for them, on the need to produce wholesome texts that will not warp a child’s developing mind. Although the HIV/AIDS scourge had not reached catastrophic proportions by the time of Mwanzi’s research, her views benefited this study as the researcher critically focuses on the type of values the selected texts aim to introduce in children.

Magaga’s article in Viva (“What Children are Reading”, 53-54) identifies the reading material accessed to Kenyan children at that time. The study highlights
deficiencies in the reading material then. Magaga’s contribution however does not mention HIV/AIDS, which by then had not been acknowledged as a phenomenon.

Akoleit (“Responses and Criticism of Children’s Literature”, 1990) analyses Barbara Kimenye’s popular “Moses Series”. She provides a critical literary parameter for appraising children’s fiction. Akoleit scrutinizes several aspects of style, theories and characterization in children’s literature. She however does not analyse the theme of HIV/AIDS. This research project emulated Akoleit’s example by obtaining children’s responses through fieldwork and interpreting them critically to establish how they view the rendering of HIV/AIDS.

Mpesha (“Children’s Literature in Tanzania”, 1995) gives a general survey of literary works accessible to Tanzanian children. She traces the growth and development of children’s literature in Tanzania. Mpesha calls for a critical framework for analyzing children’s literary books. She also points out neglected categories of children’s writings like biographies, history and sports. She does not look at children’s fiction on HIV/AIDS.

Wanjiku in her dissertation (“Importance of Children’s Literature in Education”, 1997) studies the importance of children’s literature in education. She evaluates Pamela Kola’s East Africa How, Why, and When Stories. Wanjiku explains that the stories are rich in moral, cultural and social development. She also adds that Pamela’s narratives are not didactic as lessons are weaved in stylistically by the author. This makes them interesting. Wanjiku does not study the theme of HIV/AIDS. In this study, however, we will also examine the role played by the selected texts in inculcating positive attributes to the children, without being preachy and moralistic.
Weche ("Children’s Literature as Image Forming Force", 2000) evaluates eight titles of children’s stories by Ezekiel Alembi. He concludes that the books are crucial in shaping image formation by the children. Weche does not examine children’s fiction on HIV/AIDS.

Kariuki ("Style and Meaning", 2006) examines style and meaning in children’s biographies. She opines that biographies are useful to the children. Biographies teach them valuable lessons on history, character development, geography, culture and professional activities. Kariuki additionally affirms that style was crucial in enabling children to appreciate the themes that she has enumerated. She establishes that children are hungry for more reading material on areas like science, geography and sports. Kariuki does not look at children’s fiction on HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, she suggests that there is a need to survey new topics which children are eager to read on. This study therefore explores the depiction of HIV/AIDS in children’s fiction to unravel what children gain from such texts. In addition, we consider literary devices in the selected texts that were employed to enhance appreciation of key themes.

Mutua ("Parables of Peace", 2008) appraises the depiction of genocide-inspired themes in selected Rwandese children’s stories. His research work reveals that the stories depict to children a beautiful world where human values like love, care and freedom from tribal prejudice reign supreme. Mutua, again, demonstrates the therapeutic qualities of the selected Rwandese stories in aiding children divest themselves of trauma experienced during the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. This is a valuable contribution, as this study identifies the role played by the fiction selected for this research in aiding children come to terms with suffering associated with ravages
of HIV/AIDS. Mutua, however, does not study the theme of HIV/AIDS.

The studies reviewed in this section depict substantial progress in critical analysis of children’s literary works. Nevertheless, new areas of concern have transpired. One of these topics is the theme of HIV/AIDS. Our study sheds light on the emerging body of literary writings on HIV/AIDS that hitherto had not received much critical focus. None of the scholars mentioned has looked at the depiction of the theme of HIV/AIDS in children’s literary texts. This study therefore fills this gap by researching on the contributions of the selected texts in aiding children to combat the onslaught of HIV/AIDS.

### 1.8. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study utilises the Reader Response Theory and Stylistics literary criticism. Generally, the Reader-Response Theory is concerned with the relationship between the text and reader and reader and text (Cuddon, 770). Prominence is attached to diverse ways in which a reader participates in the course of reading a text and the different perspectives, which arise in the relationship. The theory interrogates the reader’s contribution to a text. Chambers (*The Reader in the Book*, 92) argues that in a literary work, an author creates a relationship with a reader in order to discover the meaning of the text. The theory regards literature as a performing art in which individual readers create their unique text-related performances. This is realised because all readers bring their own emotions, concerns, life experiences and knowledge to their reading. Hence, each interpretation is subjective and unique.
The Reader-Response is not a unified method. It encompasses a variety of approaches (c.f. Cuddon 1991, Knowles 1996, Bressler 2003). Tyson (1999) separates the methods into five categories. These are: transaction Reader-Response Theory by Loise Rosenblatt (1939, 1995), Affective Stylistics by Stanley Fish (1980), subjective Reader-Response Theory by David Bleich (1975), Psychological Reader-Response Theory by Norman Holland (1975) and Social Reader-Response Theory associated with the later works of Stanley Fish (ibid: 157). Knowles (559) acknowledges that the focus of these theorists is on literary aspects in a text and on readers responding to the literary work.

Among the proponents of the Reader Response is Rosenblatt who proposed the principle of Transactional Reader-Response Theory (Journal of Reading Behavior, 31-49). This refers to the contributions of both the reader and the text during the reading process, which results in new insights for the reader. Rosenblatt (Journal of Aesthetic Education, 122-128) contends that readers either go through a text for information or for aesthetic pleasure produced by the work of art. Tyson (158) clarifies that aesthetic reading proposed by Rosenblatt enables a reader to experience a personal relationship to the text as he/she appreciates the text's language and evaluates its exploitation in the work of art. Beach and Hynds (463) explain that these two stances adopted by readers towards literary works influence the explanation and quality of responses. Thus, readers with poor attitudes towards reading or towards reading particular texts or themes may be averse to utilizing their communicative and interpretive skills in literature. This outlook is crucial because children are sensitive beings and are very choosy about texts they read depending on their interest in books. Further, Rosenblatt (Literature as Exploration, 32) justifies that an understanding of
the reader is necessary to explain his choice of literary texts and aspects he recognizes as significant during the reading process. This suggests that it is important to contemplate some of the factors that may shape the reader’s response to literature. Rosenblatt’s views were useful in establishing the responses of children to the literary texts that they read. Iser (The Act of Reading, 1978) argues that a reading process is distinguished by responses to arrangements inherent in a text and a completion of the reading procedure is characterised by activity on the part of a reader. Additionally, he affirms that without the reader’s performance, an unread text is simply print and it is upon being read that it becomes a poem. As we have explained above, we examine readers’ responses to the features in the selected text such as illustrations and descriptions in an endeavour to establish how the children perceive them.

Additionally, Tompkins (Reader-Response Criticism, 1980) reasons that to understand a text, meaning can only be realized in the mind of the reader. Meaning cannot be attained without the reader’s response. This fact is crucial as we explore the children’s attitude to various stances associated with delineations of HIV/AIDS in the selected texts. Fish (158), on the other hand, interrogates the actions provoked during the reading process. In his compilation of essays entitled, “Is There a Text in This Class?” Fish defines his own method of approach as "an analysis of the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words as they succeed one another in time". His argument focuses on what the text does rather than its meaning. Furthermore, he promulgates the notion of what he calls interpretive communities that share unique forms of appraisal of a text. In our analysis, the children constitute an interpretive community that share unique positions on criticism of the selected fiction. Furthermore, to acknowledge the importance of children’s perspectives on literary
works they read, Fish (158) posits that the meaning of any work of art inheres in the reader and not the text. He writes, "In the procedures I would urge, the reader's activities are at the center of attention, where they are regarded not as leading to meaning but as having meaning" (158). The Reader-Response Theory recognizes the reader as an active agent who imparts "real existence" to the work and completes its meaning through interpretation.

Despite its utilization as a literary analytical tool, the Reader Response Theory has not gone without objections. Because of its stance that comprehension of meaning in a text demands the examination of the processes and experiences that readers use to unravel what the text means, Fox (601) says that this has made the theory to be regarded as subjective, where readers interpret texts in any manner they deem fit. In their defence, the Reader Response proponents claim that in order to explore a reader's literary experience, one should inquire from the person who interacted with the text. Additionally, they affirm that reading is both subjective and objective because all readers bring their own emotions, concerns, life experiences and knowledge to their reading process. Reader Response critics therefore justify themselves that their aim is to deal with the question of how it is done, rather than what is done. Bressler (63), in defense of the Reader Response Theory, says that the theory does not support that any interpretations are justifiable or significant. Fish (14-15) for example argues, "(Readers) are not at liberty to interpret texts in any way they choose, but that they are controlled by an interpretive community".

Despite the criticism levelled above against the Reader Response Theory, it has found application in children's literature, as shown by various scholars. In a web article ("The Expanding Canon", 2007), Mora and Welch identify the functions of the
theory in education, demonstrating that learning through literature is a constructive and dynamic process, where students acquire values from texts through experiencing, hypothesising, exploring and synthesizing. Most importantly, these scholars identify that the Reader Response Theory helps students to recognize their contributions to the text as readers. We also in this research work identify the perceptions the students realised in the selected texts as they interacted with them. In addition, the theory allows children autonomy to experience a text as independent readers, rather than viewing it through the prism of adults or teachers. Through this approach, students can learn to construct their own meanings by linking the textual themes to their own lives and then describing their experiences as readers.

On the other hand, to affirm the role of Reader Response Theory in application to children’s literature, Benton (74) says that children as readers should not be viewed as empty slates to be filled with information, but that they too bring their idiosyncratic knowledge and personal style to the act of reading. According to Benton (71), the Reader Response Theory, as an approach to children’s literature, focuses on children’s responses mainly to fiction, poetry and picture books, with the focus being the understanding of what constitutes good practice in literature teaching. We also in this study look at aspects in the selected texts that constitute good fiction, to which children can relate. Further, Benton (81) adds that the theory allows the exploration of how literature can be helpful in teaching about emerging issues in the society and those matters that are of particular interest to children. Since HIV/AIDS is an issue of concern, we also look at how children respond to it in relation to their environment. Chambers (91) also justifies the consideration of the child as the reader as it aids
critics to understand a book's suitability and relevance to the readers it seeks to address.

The Reader Response Theory is employed to examine and explore the responses of children to literary texts. Critics acknowledge the necessity of inquiring from a child his perspectives of fiction. Huck (737-738), for example, acknowledges the significance of a child's responses in criticism of children's books. This is because the child's preference for and response to a text reveals elements that appeal to him in fiction. Huck adds that it is even significant to obtain a child's response to determine his interests and those of other children because, generally, children read books selected by adults. Further, the theory allows for varied responses by readers to fiction because its basis is the reader, the reading process and response. The child in this case becomes the best critique of what he/she reads.

Stylistics Literary Theory, on the other hand, focuses on the interaction between readers and the language of literary texts to explain how readers comprehend, and are affected by texts during their reading sessions. It is associated with literary critics like I. A. Richards (1929), Roman Jakobson (1960), Widowson (1992) and Mugubi (2005). Stylistics developed during shifts in literary criticism early in the twentieth century to concentrate on studying the language of literary texts, rather than their authors. I. A. Richards pioneered the theory when he argued for shift to examination of literary texts themselves and how the texts affected readers, instead of the authors. Stylisticians argue that critics should analyse the texts in detail and take careful account of how audiences read and react when arguing for particular views on texts. Roman Jakobson (354) also rejected undue concentration on the author in literary criticism in favour of an approach, which privileges the analysis of
the language of texts in relation to psychological effects of that linguistic structure on the reader. The exploitation of such deviant linguistic features in literary works is called foregrounding theory. The theory suggests that some parts of texts affect readers more than others in terms of interpretations because these textual sections are linguistically deviant or specifically patterned in some way, thus making them psychologically significant (or 'foregrounded') for readers. This perspective enriched our investigation as we also explore how some unusual language use in the selected texts makes students to express particular opinions about the depiction of HIV/AIDS in the selected fiction.

Crystal (71) and Widowson (4) comment that literary stylistic analysis explains the complex and ‘valued’ language within literature. These two critics add that the analysis sometimes focuses on narrowed and more striking features of literary language, such as ‘deviant’ and abnormal features, rather than the broader structures that are found in whole texts or discourses. Crystal and Widowson’s perspectives concur with our aim to investigate some striking elements in the selected children’s books, and how they contribute to meaning. Stewig (13-15) asserts that elements of a good children’s book include a credible plot and believable characters, infusion of dialogue and descriptive language with carefully selected word usage. Other elements include appropriate and authentic setting as well as depiction and resolution of conflicts in a satisfactory manner. These ideas are crucial as we explore how plot, characterisation and word choice in the selected texts enhance the appreciation of the books by the children. Mugubi (Stylistics and Literary Techniques, 2005), establishes several aspects of style in prose and poetry and traces the origin of stylistics from
rhetoric to its modern day exploitation in literary analysis. Among aspects he
determines is the link between form and content in literary works. In this work also,
we have brought out how certain aspects of stylistic devices enhances the main
themes that the authors of the selected texts wished to convey.

Stylistics therefore is concerned with the manner in which a writer expresses
himself in terms of form and content. In addition, it emphasises how some valued
language in a text contribute to meaning. In our study therefore, we explore how some
distinct literary devices exploited by authors of the selected texts enabled children to
make sense of the selected texts.

The two theories were considered along with aspects of Jean Piaget's (1932)
views on how children develop both mentally and physically. He promulgated the
Cognitive Development theory to explain children’s physical and mental progress.
Piaget points out that the competence of any child in any task is guided by his or her
cognitive development and biological and environmental factors in a specific stage of
life. The theory helps to explain the processes of bodily growth and mental changes
that take place in children and young people. Piaget contends that in every stage of
cognitive development, the child is an active participant in making sense of events.
According to Huitte and Hummel (1), Piaget was especially interested in explaining
how children learnt throughout various stages of growth in life and interrogated the
nature of knowledge children gained at particular stages of existence. Hence, he
(Piaget) created a detailed pattern of explanation of children’s intellectual
development at specific phases of life. Despite the criticism of Piaget’s ideas on
aspects of human mental growth and physical development, the theory remains useful
to this study since it proposes that intelligence grows because of the interaction between the environment and growth of the child (Huck, 22). The theory also provides insights on trends of general mental development of children at varying levels. It also details the capabilities of children in each stage in conceiving aspects that deal with spatial, number, quality, time, moral, chance and probability concepts, which Piaget considered as demonstrating the development of logical thought. The end of a particular stage is defined by a partial equilibrium, in which the advancing thought processes are progressively merged into a definite cognitive form. Davis (16) acknowledges that the cognitive structure is both the final achievement of one stage and the entry point of the next. Therefore, knowledge of Piaget’s ideas on the bodily growth and intellectual development of children guided this study by providing insights on how children comprehend certain concepts at specific levels of growth.

In conclusion of this chapter, the two theories were used simultaneously. The Reader Response Theory was useful in obtaining responses from the children and in critical evaluation of the reactions collected in primary data. The Stylistics critical theory, on the other hand, enabled the analysis of aspects of style to determine their appropriateness in aiding children make sense of the selected texts.

1.9. METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out through field and library research.

Field Research

Field research involved collecting primary data from the field. The study concurs with the findings of scholars of children’s literature such as Mpesha (1995),
Akoleit (1990) and Weche (2000) who argue that it is only the child himself or herself who is best suited to evaluate children's literature. Responses from children were obtained through active participation of the children. The children were given texts to read and respond to. Primary sources were collected through use of structured interviews. Peter (1994) defines structured interviews as exposure of the respondents to the same instruments for gathering data using a set of questions. Further, structured interviewing refers to a situation in which an interviewer gives each respondent a series of pre-established questions with a limited set of response categories. Scholars like Nichols (49) and Greig and Taylor (126) explain that the method is generally suitable for collecting information. The respondents were given the selected books to read out of class and then they were asked to write a short paragraph on the general opinion of the texts they had read. This method was generally successful in senior upper classes (class seven and eight) where pupils had the necessary competence to evaluate the texts on their own. In the junior upper classes (class five and six), the questionnaire had to be modified and simplified for the pupils to understand what was required of them.

Before the interviews could take place, I was obliged to establish rapport with the participants and assure them of my confidentiality. Janesick (211) asserts that establishing a rapport makes the participants open and thus more willing to share everything with the researcher. Again, children are different from adults. Therefore, they are unique as interviewees and require special treatment. One therefore needs to take into account their competences and motivations. For instance, accustomed settings such as the school environment and the presence of a familiar teacher were valuable in engendering motivation and reducing anxiety. In addition, I explained to
the respondents the significance of being truthful in their answers to the questionnaires so that their real views could be captured and evaluated. I therefore assured all the respondents that their responses were confidential and would not be accessed by other people. I again reassured the pupils that the questionnaires were not part of their exams and thus they did not need to be anxious. Additionally, I also informed them to seek counsel from me or the teacher assigned to the research in case they faced difficulties.

The study involved only upper primary (class five to eight) from three schools in Sotik District and a school each from Nairobi and Thika Districts. The selection of the schools visited was through cluster sampling. It involved the researcher dividing the population into a sample of areas (geographic boundaries). Then, I randomly sampled respondents within the areas selected. Cluster sampling generally increases the variability of sample estimates above that of simple random sampling, depending on how the clusters differ between themselves, as compared to within-cluster variation. Moreover, this method eases travel and other administrative costs. It also means that one does not need a sampling frame that lists all elements in the target, as this is cumbersome.

The schools were clustered into rural and urban schools. They were then further clustered into divisions. Schools in a particular division were next randomly sampled. Their names were written down on similar pieces of papers. The papers were then put in a container where the researcher picked a school from each division from the container. The only exception was Ndanai Division where two schools were picked to enrich the sample of the respondents. These schools were Manaret (Sotik Division) and Ndanai Primary Schools and St. Theresa (Ndanai Division) in Sotik
District. In Thika District, Wankan School (in Ruiru) and Emmanuel School (in Kawangware suburb) in Nairobi were selected.

The classes interviewed had an average class size ranging between thirty and sixty pupils. The students were given the selected texts to read out of class. Then, once they were through with the reading, the researcher went to class and distributed the questionnaire to all the students present in class. This was accomplished with the assistance of the class teachers. The students who faced difficulties with the questionnaire sought assistance of the researcher or the teacher present in class. In total, 800 pupils responded to the questionnaire.

The data collected from the pupils was categorised and analyzed through answering the research questions. This corresponds to Barbbie’s view that “as a researcher in search of a narrative thread, you will be working to organize, categorize, thematise and textualise” (362). Barbbie recommends that coding and analyses of data should focus on common themes in every category in order to achieve the objectives of the study. Thereafter, a report was prepared to determine the usefulness of children’s literature in aiding them understand the causes, spread and impact of HIV/AIDS.

Library research

The secondary data was collected through library research. Close reading of texts on literary criticism took place in order to use the general tenets of criticism to analyse the responses of the children collected from the field. The selected texts were also carefully analysed to isolate the devices that aided children and the researcher in
comprehension of significant themes. We also considered shortcomings of the stylistics devices in failing to convey key themes to the children. Furthermore, the internet was consulted to get additional reference material.

The next chapter depicts the analysis of the findings obtained from the field work.
CHAPTER TWO

CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO HIV/AIDS IN THE SELECTED LITERARY WORKS

2.0. INTRODUCTION

A response refers to the manner in which something is received. In this case, therefore, responses that the children and the researcher made out of the texts they read will be the subject of this chapter. We set out to examine how the children respond to the various issues that are articulated in the texts selected for this study. The Reader Response Theory posits that the reader is an active participant in the reading process and is able to make his/her own responses to the work that he/she has read depending on the context from which he/she has read the text. Purves and Beach (36) define response as the ongoing interaction between the individual and a literary work. They note that this kind of interaction may continue long after the individual has finished reading a book. Further, Purves and Beach identify response as interest, appreciation and taste, or conversely boredom and rejection. They argue that response can be revealed indirectly through observation of works preferred or rejected by the individual.

The children’s responses were analysed based on the insights suggested by Jean Piaget’s ideas about how children understand concepts. In his text, (The Moral Judgment of a Child, 1932), he develops the Cognitive Development theory. Piaget demonstrates that the literary competence of any child depends on his or her cognitive development and other factors in life. Greig and Taylor (28) acknowledge that the Cognitive Development theory is useful in appreciating the process of growth and
changes that take place in children and young people and how these changes shape the children's thinking, knowledge and comprehension of occurrences around them. Hence, this aspect enriched this study by providing a perspective on how children learn.

Several Reader Response theorists like Holland, Fish, Iser and Rosenblatt acknowledge the unique position of the reader in the interpretation of a text. In the book *5 Readers Reading*, Holland (1975) demonstrates that in the act of reading, a reader's mind is a repertoire of themes that shape his unique personality and reading style. The reader utilises the text, influences from different interpretive communities and his individual style of reading to build a response both like and unlike other readers' responses. Holland adds that this eventually enables the reader to uncover new insights about himself. As pointed out in our literature review, we consider the pupils interviewed as constituting an interpretive community that share common experiences or perceptions and at the same unique perspectives on the theme of HIV/AIDS.

Olsen (425), commenting on the useful role that children's books play in the lives of young people living in a hectic world, elaborates on the numerous difficulties plaguing the lives of young people. He contends that good books can relieve children and adolescents by providing a safe avenue to explore the dilemmas in their lives. Through reading, Olsen states, "Children have an opportunity to identify, to compensate, and to relive in a controlled manner a problem that they are aware of" (425). He compares the act of reading appropriate and well-written books to the preventive measures of disease control and points out that because stories aid children
to build up the self-concept, they will be capable of coping with challenges in future. This perspective therefore rationalises the need by publishers and writers to produce appropriate texts for use by children to guide them solve vexing issues prevalent in their lives.

Other critics who have experimented with the Reader Response Theory are Slatoff (With Respect to Readers, 1970) and Steig (Stories of Reading, 1989). These two scholars studied students' responses to literary texts and found out that students' personal responses to literary works can provide a basis for critical literary investigation in the classroom. The observations by the two scholars therefore justify our standpoint to anchor our research work on the responses that children make to unravel their perspectives on HIV/AIDS.

In Canada, online articles by Miall and Kuiken ("Anticipation and feeling in literary response", 1995) demonstrate their extensive studies on reader responses to literary works. Among topics they explore is how literature affects the emotions of the readers. These two scholars demonstrate that negative emotions or themes sometimes pervade literary texts. Miall and Kuiken surmise that these negative emotions are relevant and important for cathartic effect. These critics point out that the negative emotions that people feel in everyday life are much more likely to be suppressed than the positive; they are socially less acceptable, and their articulation might result in socially upsetting or detrimental consequences. Therefore, they identify literature as an avenue for safe experience of negative emotions during reading. Moreover, literature induces its readers to reflect on the nature of such emotions, to explore their repercussions and perhaps to rethink them in constructive ways within a symbolic
context that is detached from the real society. From this perspective, Miall and Kuiken identify that literature has revolutionary rationale in transforming society. In our context then, literature can be used by society to explore the unpleasant aspects associated with the ravages of HIV/AIDS and come up with appropriate strategies to deal with them.

Jeffrey Berman (American Imago, 133-136) meanwhile, demonstrates how healing can occur through literature. He illustrates how relief is experienced when students anonymously share with classmates their perceptions on sensitive subjects like drug use, suicidal inclinations, and death of loved ones, parental abuse and the like. We also examine if students find respite when they read the selected texts and confide their feelings through the questionnaire.

In addition, other studies acknowledge the role that fiction occupies in guiding children to solve difficult problems. A web article on the site, The Free Library, entitled, ‘Helping children cope with fears: using children’s literature in classroom guidance’ shows that good children’s books are endowed with characters experiencing predicaments that are similar in nature to those facing children in today’s society. These stories enable children to have insights of themselves in the main characters as they express their feelings about the exertions and accomplishments of these characters. Children’s books are therefore powerful agents for helping youngsters develop strategies for handling their own struggles. This can even aid them to fashion out new strategies of dealing with HIV/AIDS.

The contributions raised above depict that good books are important to children. In addition, they suggest that children play evaluative roles in the reading
process. We therefore explore how the children reacted to the selected texts, bearing in mind the topic of the project and the questions that formed the questionnaire.

2.1. RESPONSES TO THE CHARACTERS' HANDLING OF HIV/AIDS SCOURGE IN THE SELECTED TEXTS

The children judiciously identified and condemned characters in the selected texts that engage in dangerous unprotected sexual liaisons, which fuel HIV/AIDS. These characters symbolically represent the immoral people in society who are likely to get HIV/AIDS. The condemnation by the pupils interviewed means that the students gained awareness on the main mode of the spread of HIV/AIDS from the texts they read. Again, the fact that the children were able to comprehend how HIV/AIDS spreads justifies Piaget’s thesis about the province of comprehension of children from age eleven and beyond, which he labelled as Formal Operation Stage. Melgosa (19), quoting Piaget, confirms that this level is characterised by advancing intellectual development. Therefore, children have acquired the necessary mental ability, which gives them the capability to grasp the intricacies of knowledge. The phase is distinguished by the ability to reason about unseen objects, to predict future events and to plan for the next day or even the future. Marshall (46) observes that the formal operational stage of intellectual development heralds the arrival of the mental world of adulthood, just as the completion of pubertal changes heralds the arrival of physical adulthood. As far as literary competence is concerned, Huck (25) argues that the child can now hold several plots or sub-plots in his or her mind and see the interrelations among them. The child can also think about the form and pattern of reasoning, as well as its contents. Hence, the phase is referred to as the period of
formal thought. The responses from the pupils justified Piaget’s assertions, as illustrated by comments in this section. For example, Rahab Cherono, a Standard Eight Pupil at St. Theresa Primary School, gave the lesson she learnt from Kesani’s predicament thus:

HIV/AIDS spreads through having sex with an infected person. This happened to Nyaketo who had sex with Kagume.

This observation lends credence to the Kenya Demographic Health Survey (2003 report), which shows that sexual intercourse accounts for 98% of the infections in Kenya. The survey adds that teenagers and young girls are especially vulnerable. The report indicates that 25% of teenage girls are either coerced or forced into first sexual intercourse. Furthermore, 90% of Kenyan youths are sexually involved in unprotected sex with multiple partners by age 20.

In the selected texts, characters that engaged in sexual intercourse confessed their lack of judgement that made them succumb to immorality, hence contracting HIV/AIDS. In Kesani, through the use of dialogue, Nyaketo tells her mother and Kesani how Kagume maliciously infected her. Nyaketo adds that Kagume became angry when she insisted on the need to use protection during sexual intimacy. Her confession teaches children the need to develop negotiation skills to avert situations where the cruel intentions of bad people seeking to take advantage of them prevail. Note also the significant choice of exploiting dialogue by the author in Kesani. McDowell (141) is among critics who concur that one of the significant differences between fiction for adults and children is that children’s stories demand more use of dialogue and incident rather than descriptions and introspections, in order to capture
children’s interest. In Love, Kathesya expresses regret for succumbing to false promises of wealth from a man who made her drop out of school, brought her to a slum and infected her with HIV/AIDS. Kathesya’s lover never disclosed to her that he had HIV/AIDS, yet he knew he was a carrier. Her admission also advocates for pupils to be vigilant against such cruel and malicious people. The children’s observations, influenced by the literary texts they read, resonate with elucidations by scholars like Otim on the transformative role of children’s literature in society. Otim (79) observes that literary texts can help children to gain insight on personal, societal and national problems and provide them with crucial leads that can be utilised to deal with problems they are facing, including HIV/AIDS.

In addition to the majority of the students identifying and condemning sexual immorality, which leads to contracting HIV/AIDS, other pupils also identified different means of HIV/AIDS infection. The acknowledgements of diverse modes of HIV/AIDS infections were noted mostly in class Seven and Eight. The pupils in Standard Five and Six, whose knowledge about HIV/AIDS is scant, mostly identified infections through engagement in unprotected sex. The other modes of infection include mother-to-child transmission during childbirth. The pupils expressed concern about how to prevent it. Mother-to-Child mode of contracting HIV/AIDS is expressed in the selected texts through Fina’s characterisation. By expressing their sorrow for people who are unfortunate to have been infected through mother-to-child transmission, the children’s sentiments illustrate that their reasoning capacity is at the formal level of mental operation stage. Huck (24) argues that at the formal level of mental development children have the capacity to empathise with others who may be going through difficulties, because they are already past the egocentric thinking of
pre-operational stage and can assume another person’s point of view.

In Fina, the omniscient narrator relays Fina and her mother’s conversation and divulges to us how Fina got HIV/AIDS through mother-to-child mode of infection. Fina remarks: “They say I bewitched your womb and that is why you have never had more children after me” (11). Fina’s mother denies this, but she confesses that Fina’s father was very sick before he died. Nyamurya interrupts them before she can tell Fina the truth. However, we suspect that Fina was infected at birth. Possibly, her mother has not given birth to a new baby for fear of getting another infected child again. Mercy Chepungeno, a Standard Seven pupil at Manaret Primary, remarked:

I feel sorry for Fina because she has HIV. She is young and is not involved in sex. Her mother must have infected her before birth.

Despite the empathy for Fina depicted by the pupil mentioned above, there were pupils who were less generous to Fina and condemned her. These non-sympathetic respondents commented that Fina did not deserve any sympathy and added that they would also avoid her because she has HIV/AIDS. On close examination, these pupils were mostly found in standard Five and Six. Again, responses from pupils in the rural schools predominated. Likely, the knowledge of these pupils about HIV/AIDS is undeveloped because they are still young, as compared to pupils in class Seven or Eight. This discrepancy in knowledge is explained by Piaget’s hypothesis when he commented that some phases of human development overlap. Therefore, although the age of most of the respondents represented the formal operational stage (11 to 15 years), some children will still show thinking more typical of the preceding stage (7 to 11 years). Consequently, as Davis (18) demonstrates, although most of the children at
the formal operation can now reason about transformation and conserve quantity, the mental operations of some children are still concrete. This minor group of children still lack logical inferences and may not identify with different points of view. Objects have to be present to be reasoned about. This explains the divergence in their responses.

In Kesani, during the conversation between Kesani and Mrs. Nambi, Mrs. Nambi informs Kesani that HIV/AIDS spreads through unprotected sexual intercourse, transfusion of infected blood, use of non-sterilised needles and breastfeeding. The illustrations on the text further reinforce this message. Most of the children in Standard Seven and Eight mentioned the illustrations as informative on how HIV/AIDS spreads (see list of illustrations, 118). The illustration aids in reinforcing the author’s counsel on how HIV/AIDS spreads. Once more, Huck’s (117) comments on the exploitations of illustrations in children’s fiction concur with the children’s response. She points the role of illustrations in aiding in the interpretation of a text and extending the meaning of the book for its readers.

The children interviewed also condemned sexual exploitation of minors and young women as depicted in the selected texts. They especially noted the taking advantage of the girl-child and young women by older men, who exploited the children and girls’ naivety on sexual matters and the need for material sustenance to lure them into sexual intercourse and consequently risking infecting the girl-child with HIV or even actually infecting these young women with HIV/AIDS. Fry’s sentiments about the role of children’s literary texts justify the children’s perceptions.

Fry (97-98) recognises that literary texts enable children to acquire information and offer insights into past and future life. Additionally, he notes that literary texts enable
readers to find themselves, meaning they learn new values from stories.

The pupils interviewed condemned immoral and exploitative characters like Mr. Sunday in *Fina*, Mr. Kagume in *Kesani* and the man who made Kathesya to drop from school in *Love*. They regarded them as despicable predators deserving banishment from society. The authors symbolically use these characters to depict sex pests preying on naïve young people. Such sexual pests are cruel, inhuman and capricious. They seek to infect others maliciously so that their victims would also die. The children’s judgement of these characters is in line with their level of cognitive development at this stage. Tucker (*The Child and the Book*, 144) points out that at the formal level of mental operation, children may begin to question the integrity of the individual characters, rather than viewing it from simplified conventional morality. Additionally, most children are able to perceive the possible reasons for characters’ behaviours and can thus pass judgements on the motivations that made them behave in a particular manner. Hence, most pupils judged these immoral characters. When interviewed on what she got from *Love*, Eve Murage, a Standard Six pupil in Emmanuel Academy said:

> The character I dislike is Kathesya’s husband. He took her to Mateso Town from school and infected her with AIDS.

In *Love*, the author, through the depiction of the conversation between Kathesya’s father and the strangers from Mateso Town, shows Kathesya’s gullibility. Kathesya’s father confirms that she absconded school with a lover and eventually got infected with HIV/AIDS. As the novel ends, Ndalama from whose eyes we get the story captures Kathesya saying that:
Do not follow the path I followed. I made a mistake. I disobeyed my parents. Do not follow my path. It leads to death. (30).

These words confirm that Kathesya has learnt that bad choices in life lead to misery. Kathesya serves as the author’s mouthpiece. She passes across the message that reckless options in life lead to grief.

On the other hand, Samson Kibet, a pupil at Standard Six in Ndanai Primary, criticised Mr. Sunday that, “He is a wicked teacher. He wants Fina to be his girlfriend”. In Fina, the omniscient narrator shows Mr. Sunday talking to Fina. He tells her, “You are a very beautiful girl...”, and then, “he moved very close to her...grabbed her hand and rubbed it between his fingers...” (15). This description shows that Mr. Sunday is a sex predator. He does not deserve to be a teacher in charge of young girls.

In addition, other responses condemned Kagume in Kesani. For instance, in the questionnaire, Albert Kipkemoi, a Standard Eight pupil at Ndanai Primary expressed his dislike for Kagume. He criticised him as “a dangerous sugar daddy who gave Nyaketo AIDS.” In Kesani, Nyaketo confesses how Kagume lured her with money and consequently infected her with HIV/AIDS. The use of an illustration (see list of illustrations, 106) graphically demonstrates this. Presumably, it depicts Kagume hugging Nyaketo while holding a wad of notes. This suggests that greed for money lured Nyaketo into sexual promiscuity. Furthermore, the author depicts Kagume as a heartless beast. Despite knowing that he had HIV/AIDS, he never used any protection and infected Nyaketo. Kagume symbolises those people in society who maliciously infect unsuspecting individuals with HIV/AIDS.
Young people should be wary of such individuals and abstain from sex to avoid the kind of problems faced by Nyaketo. This is the message the author wishes to pass to young people. The pupils interviewed also voiced the same concern. They criticised misuse of young girls by immoral, elderly male members of the society. The students again affirmed that reckless involvement in sex leads to HIV/AIDS. When interviewed, Abby Chepng’eno, a Standard Seven pupil at Manaret Primary School, commented:

I learnt from Nyaketo that accepting gifts for sex is a bad habit. Nyaketo had sex with Kagume and was infected with HIV/AIDS.

Although there was general condemnation of sex predators preying on young girls, some of the pupils pointed out that the girls had a right to engage in sex for gifts or food. On scrutiny, these responses were from Emmanuel School in Kawangware. Kawangware is a slum residence and some inhabitants there engage in prostitution to survive. The older children, especially those in class Seven and Eight, appreciated this and supported individuals earning a living through peddling sex, although they pointed out that poverty made them take such appalling options. Bandura’s Social Learning theory explains the realism expressed by the children (online at http://tip.psychology.org/bandura.html). The theory explains that children’s behaviour, learning and mental development is influenced by social, emotional and motivational factors. In this instance, the social environment in Kawangware justifies the response from the children who acknowledged existence of prostitution in their locality.

The pupils interviewed also evaluated some of the myths associated with the
spread of HIV/AIDS and rejected them as baseless. The respondents instead sensibly affirmed that HIV/AIDS did not spread through normal human contact or through sharing personal effects like utensils. They faulted pupils like Nyamata and Mondo in Fina for their ignorance about the mode of spread of HIV/AIDS. In Fina, Nyamata is satirised for her ignorance on how HIV/AIDS spreads. She cries:

> Do you want me to get sick too? Slim is bad disease. Haven’t you listened to the radio warning people against it? I will not walk into a death trap. (30).

She then refuses to sit with Fina. Nyamata’s attitude contrasts with that of Kemba, Fina’s friend who displays maturity and great understanding about how HIV/AIDS spreads. In Fina (34), Kemba tells Fina “...You have a friend in me forever...”. Most of the pupils interviewed recommended that Nyamata and Mondo should get relevant information on how HIV/AIDS spreads. Evans Nyagwara, a Standard Six pupil at Emmanuel Academy, affirmed the worthwhile lesson he derived from Kemba:

> I learnt that HIV does not spread through sitting, eating or playing with someone with HIV. I do not like what Nyamata did to Fina. She refused to sit with her because Fina had HIV. Nyamata should have learnt properly from her teacher how HIV spreads.

The identification with the virtuous deeds performed by Kemba is apt. In the introduction, it was suggested that children love individuals whom they can identify with in their fiction, more so, if they are child characters. Tucker (18-19) argues that children prefer child or childlike characters that perform heroic deeds in their fiction. This concurs with the admiral of Kemba by most of the respondents.
The pupils interviewed also condemned characters in the selected texts for flaws like gullibility and desire for material wants that made them accept gifts for sex, hence contracting HIV/AIDS. Kathesya is faulted in Love for being gullible and succumbing to an early marriage in the promise of wealth. Consequently, she loses an opportunity in life. Kathesya is a symbol of those girls who make faulty decisions in life and suffer because of such decisions. The depiction of her life experiences enable pupils to learn key lessons about the need to focus on wholesome goals like education. Some of the older pupils evaluated Kathesya’s decision to elope with a stranger and concluded that education could have enabled her to get a good job and be self-sufficient. She then would not have fallen prey to exploitation. Mark Kiptoo, who is in Standard Seven at Manaret Primary, implies this. He said that if Kathesya had finished school, “she would have found a good job like our teacher. She then would have bought the good things she needed”.

The respondents also censured Nyaketo in Kesani for being greedy for material gains. Ann Chebet, who is in Standard Eight at Manaret Primary School, wrote in her response, “Nyaketo wanted to enjoy good clothes, money and a good life. She then got AIDS.” Through the depiction of the dialogue between Nyaketo, Kesani and their mother, the author divulges how Nyaketo was infected. Nyaketo confesses how poverty and a desire for material wants made her to succumb to sexual demands by Kagume. This admission also shows how her naivety and greed wasted her chance to a live life free from the ravages of HIV/AIDS. She says:

...he offered me the things I was looking for: good clothes, stereo, money and a good time. He even took me to a clinic where I was given an injection to prevent pregnancy.(13).
The pathos in Nyaketo’s words in *Kesani* makes this confession potent:

“Don’t worry, maama, I feel so weak. I do not think I will live much longer...” (16).

One cannot help but feel pity for her. Underlying this pity is the realisation that extreme greed leads to suffering in life. This is the lesson that we derive from Kesani’s life.

The children regretfully identified the devastating consequences of HIV/AIDS epidemic in the books they read. They empathized with the affected families because of the economic burdens that HIV/AIDS imposes. This depicts the advanced level of children’s response to literature due to their growing mental development. Huck (24) agrees with Piaget’s sentiments when he points out that children’s mental operations shift from an egocentric pattern of thought that characterises ages 2-7 into the concrete-operational and formal operation period that roughly corresponds to the mental operations of children aged from 7 to 15 years where children can more easily identify with different points of view. Huck confirms that at the levels of mental developments illustrated above, children can now readily put themselves into the position of another person. The responses from the pupils justifies this perception when most respondents sadly pointed out that the HIV/AIDS disease occasions increased spending on healthcare by affected households to cater for ailing members. This is at the expense of other necessities like education and food. Jean Wangui, a pupil in Standard Seven at Emmanuel Academy, empathised thus with Kesani’s family:

I feel sorry for Nyaketo’s Mother. She has spent all her money to pay Nyaketo’s fees at the University. Nyaketo is dying and the money will go to waste.

In *Kesani*, the omniscient narrator captures the turmoil in Kesani’s home. Her mother
sadly laments to Kesani’s aunt:

Tendo, what shall I do? The crops have not yielded much this year. We have had no rain for three months. I can barely feed Kesani and myself. How can I afford to take Nyaketo to hospital...What if I have to transport her dead body back home? (7).

The lament from Kesani’s mother depicts the mental anguish that HIV/AIDS occasions. It aggravates poverty, increases financial burdens and creates psychological suffering for the affected. Furthermore, studies by the World Health Organization (2009) cite that HIV/AIDS causes extreme destitution, lack of proper nutrition and health care. This supports the children’s responses. Most children pointed out the negative economic consequences of HIV infection.

The pupils interviewed abhorred HIV/AIDS related stigma. Stigma refers to the bias and discrimination towards HIV positive people and their close associates. It may be manifested in the form of rejection from community like Fina and her Mother in Fina, who were almost evicted from their village.

In Fina, the omniscient narrator captures Fina asking her mother: “Maama, I’m told the villagers tried to chase us out of this home when I was young. Is that part of the family secret?” (5). The assertion by Fina confirms that the society her family lives in is discriminative and biased towards them because of their positive HIV/AIDS status. The villagers are again portrayed as heartless and cruel. Fina is also depicted as a perceptive and inquisitive girl who has noticed that they are shunned by society. Besides, Fina’s mother is being criticised for her secrecy about Fina’s HIV status. Through use of irony, the author shows that her efforts were imprudent and in vain. This is because malicious characters like Nyamurya and her son Mondo discovered
that Fina was HIV positive and used this knowledge to harass her. Ironically, some pupils interviewed sided with the decision by Fina’s mother not to inform Fina that she (Mother) and her (Fina) had AIDS. They pointed out that this secrecy was necessary to prevent Fina from getting worried and yet she was still young. Other pupils affirmed that because HIV/AIDS is a dangerous disease, an infected person should keep the secret to himself or herself to avoid being rejected by the public. The views expressed here by the pupils are influenced by society’s perception of HIV/AIDS. Again, Bandura’s perspective on how children learn validates this assertion. Greig and Taylor (27), quoting Bandura, point out that a child learns a whole range of behaviours through observation of his/her parents and society. Significant others serve as role models of behaviour. Greig and Taylor concur that Bandura defines this phenomenon as observational learning or modelling. The pupils’ varied responses also testify to tenets of the Reader Response Theory that multiple interpretations of a work of art are possible.

Most pupils interviewed cited stigma and discrimination as inhuman and cruel. Hope Achieng is in Standard Seven at Manaret Primary School. Achieng concurred with other pupils when asked who her least favourite character in *Fina* was. She declared thus:

I do not like Nyamurya. She avoided eating at Fina’s home because she thought Fina and her mother had AIDS. She does not understand how AIDS spreads.

Achieng is criticising Nyamurya’s ignorance on how HIV/AIDS spreads. She condemns Nyamurya’s bias towards Fina and her mother because of her lack of knowledge on how HIV/AIDS spreads. This response shows that by reading the
selected text, Achieng has learnt how HIV/AIDS spreads, as depicted in Fina, and can evaluate the behaviour of characters. She condemns negative behaviour displayed by Nyamurya. The author is trying to discourage such a vice. The condemnations by the pupils justify the pedagogical values of the selected texts as observed correctly by Brooks (306). He notes that literature plays the role of strengthening the formation of morals and feelings of solidarity, fairness, tolerance, compassion and care that are necessary to help society deal with the challenges that it faces.

Still, through exploitation of purposive characterization, the writer portrays admirable characters like Miss Kisa, who warns the rest of the class against shunning Fina. In Fina, she remarks, “We all need to show Fina love and affection and not discriminate against her. And now, I would like you Nyamata to apologise to Fina and shake her hand” (32). Miss Kisa’s attitude contrasts sharply with that of Nyamurya, Mondo’s mother. The author, by use of this contrast, satirizes Nyamurya for being ignorant about how HIV spreads, yet she is an adult. Her ignorance is all the more prominent when compared with the knowledge displayed by little Kemba, Fina’s best friend in school, who knows that day to day normal human contact does not cause HIV/AIDS.

In Love, stigma takes the form of rejection of Kathesya by her father. In their responses, the pupils deplored the action by Kathesya’s father. He disowns Kathesya when he discovered that she was ailing from HIV/AIDS. The pupils furthermore condemned mistreatment of Sadaka, Kathesya’s boy, by other children in Mateso Town. Ndalama, the first person narrator, captures one of the little boys in the slum harassing Sadaka. The little boy affirms thus in Love, “Maama says we keep away from him. We should not enter his home! They carry the curse!” (13). These words
convey how society has made the little boy prejudiced towards people infected with HIV/AIDS. Adults have influenced him to be biased. Therefore, as he grows up, he will be prejudiced against people with HIV/AIDS. The author is hence indicting society for misleading children about how HIV spreads. The children consequently discriminate against people with HIV/AIDS. The children interviewed were in agreement with the author, as shown by the following response, and many other similar reactions. Hafza Ali Haiba, a Standard Five pupil at Emmanuel Academy, responded when interviewed about the text Love that “I dislike the children in the book. They abuse Sadaka saying the boy with slim.” Hafza means that Sadaka is abused because he is HIV positive.

In addition, most of the children criticized some negative psychological emotions arising because of stigma. These are fear and shame displayed by some characters. They specifically referred to the case of Fina in Fina. Her mother did not want it known that they were infected with HIV/AIDS. Most of the pupils interviewed sympathised with Fina’s predicament, but criticised her mother for being secretive and hiding from Fina her HIV status. In Fina, Mrs Kyooma tells Fina, “Just keep the secret. We’ll talk one day” (5). Later, when Mondo openly reveals Fina’s status, Fina is devastated and refuses to go to school. She cries thus to her mother: “...why didn’t you tell me that I have slim, mother? All those drugs you always give me, telling me to hide them from people!” (8). Fina’s bitter complain against her mother depicts how secretiveness and short sightedness by Fina’s mother made Fina subject to humiliation at school. Most respondents pointed out that it would have been prudent if the family had been open about their HIV/AIDS status. This disclosure would have saved Fina the trouble of her HIV/AIDS status being a source of scorn at school, because
everyone would have already known. Raymond Kipsang, who is in standard eight at Manaret Primary School, confided in the questionnaire that among the lessons he gained was the need to avoid negative psychological emotions associated with HIV/AIDS. In his assessment of *Fina*, Kipsang wrote, “I realized that fear and shame is bad. It prevents sick people from asking for help from friends and seeking for treatment in hospitals.”

This chapter has therefore demonstrated the pupils’ perspectives on the depiction of HIV/AIDS in the selected texts. Clearly, the children recognise the transformative powers of reading literary texts. Therefore, the children displayed new perspectives they gained from the texts by disapproving of sexual immorality that leads to HIV/AIDS. They also condemned the sexual exploitation of children and the youth by older members of society who infect them with HIV/AIDS. The students disapproved of the gullibility and ignorance displayed by some characters on sexual matters, which made them susceptible to HIV/AIDS. The pupils also warned against accepting gifts in exchange for sex, which fuels HIV/AIDS. Again, they acknowledged other modes of HIV/AIDS transmissions and sympathized with characters that were infected through mother to child transmission and wished it could be prevented. The pupils also condemned stigma and discrimination against HIV/AIDS patients. Instead, they urged for love, care and concern from family, friends and society. The acknowledgements of such wholesome values demonstrates that fiction has the ability to enrich children’s perception on challenging issues and that children can learn more about human nature from fiction. Additionally, the children can gain useful values from fiction and this will enable them to map out their worlds in a better manner guided by the values gained from reading appropriately.
written fiction.

All this was only possible because the selected texts are skillfully written to enable easy comprehension. The next chapter explores the devices that enabled the authors of the selected texts to depict HIV/AIDS in a manner that did not frighten or offend the children who were interviewed.
CHAPTER THREE

DEVICES THAT ENABLED CHILDREN TO COMPREHEND GORY THEMES

3.0. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we carry out an analysis on some aspects inherent in the selected works that enabled children to read them optimistically and divest themselves of negative emotions associated with HIV/AIDS. This is because the selected books have hedo-palliative devices that were deliberately utilized by the authors. These refer to narrative aspects exploited in fiction enabling literary works to be read hopefully, thus, allowing the readers to heal themselves from any anxieties that they may have been going through. When a work of fiction is endowed with hedo-palliative narrative dynamics, then it can be exploited for bibliotherapy objectives. Bibliotherapy involves a guided reading of literary texts to aid in solving vexing issues. In an online site, Pardeck (1989) defines bibliotherapy as a "... technique for structuring interaction between a facilitator and a participant based on mutual sharing of literature".

Additionally, critics demonstrate that creative writers should be conscious of the effects the stylistic strategies they utilise and themes they depict have on the readers' perspectives of the works of art. For example, critics such as Babbit (165), Tucker (12) and Aiken (30) explain that children’s writings should ultimately end in hope rather despair. Such hopeful conclusions can only be brought out by a deliberate choice of specific stylistic strategies and themes. Tucker (12) justifies this preposition further when he argues that children up to pre-adolescence are unlikely to appreciate
the gloomier plots of Zola, Gissing, or Hans Andersen's depressing short stories. Hence, in this chapter, we study how the authors of the selected texts make use of plot and pacifying themes to depict the sensitive theme of HIV/AIDS, in a manner that leads to hope rather than despair for its readers.

On the other hand, Halsted in "Guiding the Gifted Reader" emphasises that the successful use of literary texts for bibliotherapy must involve three key stages. Step 1 is identification where the reader is able to relate to a character(s) and his situations in the book. Step 2 is catharsis, where the reader begins going through the emotions linked to the character and empathises with him/her. Step 3 is insight, where the reader absorbs what they have learnt about the character and the way they handled the situation and apply it to their own real-life experiences. Lastly, to confirm this process, Halsted adds that questions can be posed to the reader/s to help them open up about the situation and to verify their understanding. In this section, our analysis was based on exploring and evaluating the responses from the pupils that have depicted the objectives mentioned by Halsted.

Levine (135-153), in addition, demonstrates the healing power of literary texts arguing that stories exploit the children's innate imagination and ability to shelve reality. Levine adds that children's creative understanding enables two levels of awareness to operate simultaneously: "At the conscious level the child is focused on the content of the actual narrative, while at the unconscious level a search is performed for [the child's] experiences which parallel the narrative" (145). This aspect of double operation of perception allows children to identify with characters in a narrative and enable them to harness what they have learned from the characters for
their own real-life situations. We then in this research paper explore what values the children learn from the characters in the selected texts and how they aim to utilise these values to deal with HIV/AIDS in society.

Having established that fiction can be used to heal troubled children, we now embark on the analysis of some of the elements that resulted in relief for the respondents. We explore the role of plot in enabling the pupils to establish affinity with the protagonists and their situations in the selected texts. We again ascertain the role of catharsis, where the reader suffers with the central character and empathises with him/her. Lastly, we explore insight, where the reader absorbs valuable lessons from the characters and their situations and use them in light of their own experiences. We discern this by exploring the responses from the pupils about HIV/AIDS.

We also look at the function of pacifying themes as hedo-palliative. Child readers realize HIV/AIDS can steal beauty from their lives by causing sickness and suffering. It again results in acute fear, psychological and economic distress. These rob beauty as realized by the children who read the selected texts. Nevertheless, beauty can be restored. The selected texts make children realize that the challenges associated with HIV/AIDS are surmountable. Writers of the selected texts employ hedo-palliative devices to offer children reading them positive coping imagery. It is these aspects we explore in this chapter bearing in mind the children’s responses.
3.1. PLOT EXPLOITATION FOR CATHARTIC EFFECT

Aristotle (cited online in the Dictionary of the History of Ideas) defines catharsis as the purging of emotions after an overwhelming vicarious experience. This occurs after watching a play or reading a story. As conflicts in a story unfold, readers identify with the protagonist, suffer with him/her and celebrate his/her triumphs. When the conflicts are finally resolved, readers triumph with or fall with the protagonist. This psychological identification with the protagonist allows the child reader to be mentally and emotionally involved with the hero/heroine of the children’s story. Eventually, the mental journey makes the child reader to get rid of negative emotions associated with HIV/AIDS. These negative emotions are fear, stigma, discrimination, abandonment and economic burdens. Purgation takes place when these vexing issues are resolved in the selected fiction.

Plot in the selected children’s books is purposely structured to convey vexing conflicts to the child readers. Plot mimics painful and troubling HIV/AIDS situations that cause fear, suffering, despair and disillusionment to the child readers. The characters in the selected storybooks undergo these vexing situations. This is in agreement with the reality suggested by Babbitt (156) that children are not emotional beggars hence they understand problematic themes in fiction, which sometimes also tear them apart in real life. Nevertheless, in the unfolding plot in the selected texts, the troubling circumstances are unravelled and conclusively determined as the stories end. This allows the child readers some emotional distance to experience the negative themes in a story setting, rather than in real life experience, resulting in relief and vicarious learning. This is the cathartic effect in the selected texts. It eases the distress of the child readers, because the conflicts are amicably resolved. Babbitt also justifies
such hopeful conclusions in literary works. She identifies this aspect of style as distinguishing children’s stories from adults’ fiction. Babbitt writes that children’s stories ultimately end with “hope rather than resignation and contains within it a difference not only between the two literatures but also between youth and age” (158). We therefore explore how deliberate patterning of plot in the selected stories brings catharsis, as evidenced by responses of the children who read them.

In *Love*, a brief description of its plot is as follows: Ndalama’s home is swept away by raging floods. This symbolises the ravages of HIV/AIDS in the community. Then further catastrophe sets in when two strangers arrive with disturbing news from Mateso Town that Kathesya is ailing from HIV/AIDS. At that time, a meeting to discuss the ravages of HIV/AIDS is being conducted at Ndalama’s home. Kathesya’s mother decides to rush to the aid of her daughter in Mateso. Ndalama’s father refuses to go and see how she is faring on saying that he parted ways with her when she absconded school and left with a lover who infected her with HIV. Ndalama accompanies his mother to Mateso Town where they find Kathesya in dire circumstances ravaged by HIV/AIDS and abandoned by society. They nurse her and her little boy Sadaka and eventually she is restored to health. Kathesya, on the advice of her doctor, Dr. Tiba Katiba, adopts the principal of positive living and vows to live positively with HIV/AIDS. Her turn around is so great that her community in Mateso Town comes together to find ways of dealing with the ravages of HIV/AIDS and they also got hold of Kathesya’s lover and took him to hospital. The novel ends in an optimistic note when Kathesya’s father accepts her back and Sadaka tests negative for HIV/AIDS. Additionally, Kathesya secures a job as a counsellor. In *Fina*, the plot begins with the depiction of Fina, the main character, preparing for a dance at school.
During the dance session, she emerges the top dancer, wins an award and makes new friends such as Benson. As Fina and her mother are going home, we begin to suspect that there is something amiss when they meet Nyamurya, a neighbour who refuses to shake Fina and her mother’s hands (because they are HIV positive). We glimpse Fina’s feelings as she recollects that Nyamurya never ate anything at their home. Additionally, Fina’s mother had told her to hide the medicine she is taking from Nyamurya and Mondo, her son. Furthermore, Fina’s mother tells her that the villagers had once tried to drive them out of their house for some reasons. She was also on the verge of disclosing to Fina that they are HIV positive when Nyamurya interrupts them and she never reveals anything to Fina. When Fina goes to her school, she receives a letter from Benson and shares the news with Kemba her best friend. We also know that Mr. Sunday, her teacher, is interested in her, although she is a minor. Fina’s world crumbles during a school parade when Mondo, Nyamurya’s son, insults her that ‘slim’ smells, meaning she is HIV positive. Fina faints and she is taken home. She castigates her mother for not revealing to her that she is HIV positive. It is then we learn that Fina was infected with HIV/AIDS during birth. Fina’s troubles are multiplied when Benson and Mr. Sunday disown her because she is HIV positive. A counsellor comes to her aid and convinces her to go back to school. Fina, however, faces further challenges when her fellow pupils such as Nyamata refuse to come into contact with her because they fear they will contract HIV/AIDS. Miss Kisa, her class teacher and Kemba her best friend come to her aid. Miss Kisa informs the class that HIV/AIDS is not contracted through normal day to day interaction. Additionally, the school holds an HIV/AIDS awareness assembly and they learn wholesome values on how HIV/AIDS spreads. Fina’s world is restored to a semblance of order as she
affirms the principle of positive living and even founds a club to combat HIV/AIDS. In Kesani, plot begins with a description of Kesani’s troubled life. She is fretting over the fate of her sister, Nyaketo, who came back from school ailing from an undisclosed ailment. She overhears her mother and her Aunt Tendo saying that Nyaketo has HIV/AIDS. Kesani herself confesses that she contracted HIV/AIDS after engaging in unprotected sex with Kagume who infected her unknowingly. Nyaketo confesses that desire for material sustenance made her succumb to immorality in school as Kagume promised her love, money, clothes, a stereo and a good life. Unable to come to terms with this disclosure, she seeks the counsel of her teacher, Mrs. Nambi, who suggests that Nyaketo should go for testing and counselling at TASO centre. Nyaketo does so and she tests positive for HIV/AIDS. She receives counselling and treatment and gets well. She adopts the principle of positive living and also gets help from the TASO centre to start an income generating project. That then was a brief description of plot in the three selected texts.

In the introductory setting in Love, raging floods sweep away Ndalama’s home. This symbolically shows ravages of HIV/AIDS on the community. The mood developed is one of fear and despair. Ndalama, the first person narrator, reports:

Suddenly, there was a dramatic sound from the roof...a sudden burst of rain ...a louder crack from the roof. I held the bedpost with fear (1).

As the story unfolds, Ndalama’s father reinforces further despair. He denounces Kathesya for getting infected with HIV/AIDS. He is captured in Love (7) complaining, “She and I parted ways on that day my neighbours laughed at me. I shall
not go." Because of this rejection of his daughter, worry and despondency is maintained. This is vexing to the child readers, as shown by this sample response from Alex Mwithii who is in Standard Eight at Emmanuel Academy:

In the story, I feared for Ndalama because his home collapsed. I also felt sad when their father disowned Kathesya because she has AIDS. I thought she was going to die alone.

There is identification with the suffering protagonist, evidenced in this response. The response expresses sympathy for the ailing Kathesya because of her suffering. Furthermore, the respondent pities Ndalama, the hero of the story, because of the tribulations in their home. Generally, this is what most pupils affirmed. Empathy with the tormented hero/heroine is apt as Lewis (15) demonstrates the reality that images in children's literature reflect the child's external reality and can influence his or her worldview. In some instances though, there were pupils who opined that Kathesya was ailing because she was paying the sins of her immoral behaviour and deserved to die. Although such responses may seem awkward, Bawden (9) explains that children have a simplified version of right and wrong. Such children are therefore justified to believe that Kathesya made a mistake and is being punished for it. Huitte and Hummel (3), on their study of Piaget's ideas on the process of human intellectual development, additionally, show that children think differently from adults and express a different philosophy of life. Therefore, while adults may reason that
Kathesya deserves some sympathy, some of the children, whose moral scheme is different from that of adults due to their immature psychological and conceptual development, take her to be in the wrong. This simple-morality type of thinking gives children a feeling of security.

In Muhirwe's Kesani, the setting is in a school environment. As the story begins, Kesani, the main child character, is pondering her poor performance in end of term exam. She is troubled by her ailing sister's condition, hence her poor performance. The omniscient narrator reports:

The shouts and laughter of school children filled the air announcing the arrival of the December Holiday. Kesani fingered her report form sorrowfully... (1).

This description brings to the fore the internal conflict taking place in Kesani's mind. Again, it creates a bond between the reader and Kesani, the child heroine. This is crucial because children love heroes/heroines who solve problems they face. Tucker (Writers, Critics and Children, 181-182) confirms that children love heroes whom they can identify with in their fiction as well as depiction of actions that they can fantasize about and test themselves against. Therefore, children keenly follow twists and turns in stories to realise how the hero achieves his ends. Besides, Kesani is associated with themes like hope and creativity in solving vexing issues.

The turmoil in Kesani’s mind prepares readers for the revelation of what ails her sister. Nyaketo has been sick for four months. In Kesani, the author describes her as, “a mere skeleton, hardly eating or talking...hidden away from the curious eyes of fellow villagers” (4). The mood developed is one of fear and disillusionment because
of the harm HIV has done to Nyaketo’s body. The pupils interviewed also expressed the same sentiments. John Njoroge, a Standard Seven pupil at Wankan Academy, acknowledges his sorrow below:

I feel sorry for Kesani’s mother because Nyaketo is sick with HIV. She is going to die. All people with HIV die one by one.

This response expresses fatalism and resignation that people often express when faced with the ravages of HIV/AIDS. They regard HIV/AIDS as a dreaded terminal illness. It creates fear and despondency.

In Fina, the initial plot setting depicts Fina at school. She excels in dancing, despite having HIV/AIDS. She is unaware of her condition, though. During a school assembly, Fina’s world comes crashing down upon her. Mondo and other cheeky boys chide her during the dance award ceremony that slim smells. They mean that she is HIV positive. Because of the stigma and subsequent humiliation she is subjected to, Fina calls out to her friend:

What are they talking about? Fina asked Kemba...During assembly, Mondo called me a dancing corpse. Now this one is saying that slim smells. Where is all this coming from? (26).

These words show Fina’s bewilderment. They also indict Fina’s mother. She must have been ashamed because of Fina’s condition and did not inform her in time that she had HIV/AIDS. The words also reveal that Mondo and some pupils are cruel and insensitive to Fina’s plight. Fina’s bitter complain shown above also depicts that stigma and discrimination exist in schools, for Fina’s school is representative of any average school in Kenya. The author is condemning existence of these themes and characters in learning institutions. The school setting where Fina’s predicament is
depicted is a deliberate stylistic strategy exploited by the author of the text. Again, Huck’s (7) sentiments about the exploitation of setting in children’s fiction come to mind. She opines that setting should develop characterisation and theme. In this instance, setting conveys that stigma and discrimination are prevalent in learning institutions, as depicted through Mondo’s discriminative attitude towards Fina.

Most pupils interviewed empathised with Fina and condemned stigma and discrimination in the school environment. They vowed never to discriminate against anyone who is HIV positive in school. Rehema Abongo, a Standard Eight pupil at Manaret Primary, wrote:

I feel sorry for Fina. Mondo and Nyamata laugh at her because she has HIV. I will not behave like them in school. I know sitting with an infected person does not cause AIDS.

Abongo, here, shares Fina’s predicament. This is identification with the protagonist, as shown previously. Again, Fina’s characterisation as the main child character is a deliberate stylistic strategy by the author to convey themes such as empathy and concern for HIV/AIDS victims. McDowell (149) shows why authors of children’s texts use child central characters. He justifies that children find it easy to bond with child characters rather than adult characters, whom children view with same attitude as in real life. In addition, McDowell adds that it is easier for authors to develop complex child characters whose deeds resonate with the audience; rather than grown-ups whose depiction must be in a straight jack manner where their personalities do not change significantly, if children are to identify with them.

In the unfolding plot, Fina faints at school and she is taken home. Fina’s world
is shattered, as depicted by her innermost thoughts, which the omniscient narrator allows us to glimpse. In *Fina*, she asks her mother thus:

Give me one reason why I should go to school. Tell me why you never told me the truth—that I have HIV! All the children know it; they avoid me like death. Actually, as Mondo said, I am a corpse already. Why didn’t you tell me that I have slim, mother? All those drugs you always gave me, telling me to hide them from people. Maybe if you had told me the truth, I would have been prepared for all this. (28).

Most child respondents expressed their sorrow for Fina. They wondered how she got HIV/AIDS, yet she was not engaged in sex. Fina’s predicament distressed most respondents because she was easily their heroine due to her dancing prowess. Other respondents viewed her as too young to be sick with HIV/AIDS. Other pupils also wondered why the author did not portray her differently so that she is not a victim of HIV/AIDS. Alex Kamau, who is in standard seven at Emmanuel Academy, sums it up for the children when he confirms his sense of sorrow and identification with the suffering protagonist, as explained earlier. He wrote:

I like the book *Fina*. However, I think the writer should not have made Fina to have HIV/AIDS. This is bad because she is a child and was not having sex.

Although Fina’s circumstance is distressing to the child respondents, her characterisation is deliberate. The author uses Fina as a symbol of characters akin to her who are trapped in circumstances similar to hers and could have been infected at birth like her. Furthermore, as we will realise later, she triumphs over her fate therefore depicting hopeful themes like positive living and advocacy against HIV/AIDS. Fina forms a club to fight HIV/AIDS in her school. This makes her a powerful agent of change, considering that she is a child. The child readers easily bonded with her and identified with her struggles, successes and noble deeds. As
demonstrated previously by McDowell (149), children love fiction whose central character is a child whom they can easily bond with. Hence, most of the respondents are sympathetic to Fina.

Developments in plot further relay other distressing themes in all the three texts. In *Kesani*, the setting shifts to Kathesya house. She resides alone in pitiful circumstances. The author describes her home as a cardboard, paper and old brown tin sheets hovel. The description breeds the mood of hopelessness. It also reinforces the key theme of abandonment by her family and society. Moreover, the powerful illustration of a supposedly half-death Kathesya paints a picture of a desolate woman ravaged by HIV/AIDS (see list of illustrations, 108). This invites the child readers' emotions to participate in Kathesya’s suffering. Abigail Chepng’eno, a standard eight pupil at Manaret Primary, expressed how she felt:

I feel bad when I look at Kathesya’s picture in the story. She is alone and is very sick. I wish someone could help before AIDS kills her.

In *Kesani*, as the plot unfolds, the omniscient narrator shows the conversation between Kesani’s mother and Aunt Tendo, who says, “Kabaro that girl has got AIDS...” (6). Most of the responses expressed their distress because of the dire situation that the ailing Nyaketo is going through. Anne Ochar, who is in Standard Eight at Manaret Primary School, describes this unhappiness:

What I do not like about the story is the pain Nyaketo is going through. I feel sorry for her because Kagume gave her a bad disease. She should never have slept with him. She was a beautiful girl in the University and she was to study and get a good job and her own money.

As the plot progresses in *Kesani*, Nyaketo, through use of the first person
narration technique, which is reliable and believable to the readers, confesses her innermost feelings. Her story is heart wrenching and full of despondency. In hopelessness, Nyaketo cries, “Don’t worry Maama, I feel so weak. I do not think I will live much longer (16). This is upsetting to the child reader.

Although Nyaketo’s experiences are distressing, her life symbolically presents valuable lessons to the children. They learn from her that sexual predators abound and are set to waylay them, if they are not careful. When asked to comment on Nyaketo’s plight, Keycey Kiprono, a Standard Eight pupil at Wankan Academy, said:

I learnt from Nyaketo the need to be careful in life because there are people who are sick with AIDS. They infect healthy people deliberately to kill them. This is what Kagume did to Nyaketo.

The realisation shown by Kiprono affirms Bruno Bettelheim’s assertion about the role of fairy tales in The Uses of Enchantment. The same analogy on the role of fairy tales characters can be extended fiction. Bettelheim shows that fairy tales characters are symbolic depictions of real people in human society. Bettelheim establishes that wolves represent individuals who prey on young children for sexual favours. He advises children to be wary of such wolves, especially gentle wolves that are the most dangerous because they entice young girls in the streets and even into their homes and derail their lives. Wolves symbolise sexual predators. Therefore, Love asserts useful lessons through deliberate depiction of Nyaketo’s tragic incident in the hands of Kagume. Nyaketo’s sad experiences depict the existence of predatory men who deceive young girls who have just matured and infect them with HIV/AIDS.

In all the three texts, plot endings facilitate cathartic relief from the terrifying moments illustrated earlier. In Love, the setting finally shifts to Ndalama’s village.
His father welcomes and accepts the daughter he had previously disowned. Ndalama, the first person narrator, reports his father saying, “Kathesya, I finally realised that a parent’s love should last forever. You will always be my daughter” (33). This soothing expression depicts the change in mood from despondency to happiness. It again proves that Katheysa’s father is now forgiving and loving. The words further symbolise values that the writer wishes would reign supreme in society. They embody the author’s social vision for a society ravaged by HIV/AIDS. The child readers identified with this conclusion too. The action by Ndalama’s father removed the dark cloud hanging over the family. The setting in Ndalama’s home transforms from initial disposition of doom to optimism. Paul Onyango, a student in Standard Eight at Manaret primary, along with other respondents, confirmed this when he wrote:

I like the ending of the story. Kathesya is well and Sadaka does not have HIV/AIDS. Kathesya goes home and her father does not chase her away. He welcomes her back. I was sad when I read he had abandoned her.

The fear initially associated with HIV/AIDS is relieved. Not only has a cathartic experience taken place, there is also the formulation of new self. Jane Wangui, who is in Standard Eight at Wankan Academy, reveals a new understanding as shown below:

I learnt from Kathesya that people with HIV could get a job. I have realized the disease does not kill immediately. If possible, I will ensure people with HIV get jobs to support themselves.

This response and many others show that children who read the selected texts learnt new values. They recognised that HIV/AIDS is not a death sentence. Life can be useful and meaningful once more. An infected person can even get a job. This is the message the authors intended the children to affirm, after reading the selected texts.
In *Fina*, the denouement of the plot finally expresses respite through the depiction of the dialogue between Fina and a counsellor. Critics also suggest the importance of using dialogue as a stylistic strategy in children’s fiction. Huck (13) demonstrates that children prefer a style characterised by depiction of dialogue rather than introspection and description. Additionally, Huck explains that children demand dialogue that is believable, smooth and effortless in their literary works. The selected texts have thus exploited the resource of dialogue. The dialogue depicts the healing powers of counselling for HIV/AIDS patients. The counsellor tells Fina, “You will live long if you go back to school. Ignore all those that scorn you. Take your drugs, eat well and live long” (29). This conclusion is reassuring. The child readers interviewed were perturbed by Fina’s predicament and were wondering what was going to happen to her. The counsellor’s presence as a character therefore offers solutions to deal with the problem. After counselling, Fina goes back to school. Although she faces further challenges, Miss Kisa, her class teacher is at hand again to help and give moral support to her. Miss Kisa is loving and concerned. To most child readers, Miss Kisa represents a motherly figure that is always at hand to offer help in times of crisis. The omniscient narrator quotes her in *Fina* saying, “....we all need to show Fina love and affection not discriminate against her...” (32). Miss Kisa is the author’s spokesperson. She affirms values that the author wishes to inculcate in children. Some of the students reported that they felt happy for Fina because Miss Kisa was there to help her. In her affirmation of the optimistic conclusion, Naomi Chelangat, a Standard Seven pupil at Manaret Primary, proclaimed:

I was scared for Fina. I thought she was going to faint again. However, Miss Kisa is there to help her. I felt happy she was not going to be chased away from school. The story ends happily.
In *Love*, the optimistic conclusion of the plot brings cathartic relief. Nyaketo receives counselling and adopts positive living. In the dialogue between her and Kesani, she says:

...I must eat nutritious foods; get plenty of rest and exercise. Abstain from sex, avoid alcohol, get prompt treatment for any illness and have a positive attitude towards life. I should also draw emotional support from God, my family and friends...I will also rear some few chicken using money from the Aids support group... (29).

This confession again demonstrates the curative powers of dialogue. Kesani had earlier on confided in Mrs. Nambi who suggested a solution for Nyaketo’s predicament. Dialogue therefore enables sharing of problems. It also teaches the child readers that HIV/AIDS can be tackled through recourse to the principle of positive living, which Nyaketo espouses. The children who read the selected texts and responded to the questionnaire were happy about this conclusion. They said they realized that HIV positive people could have a second chance in life through the adoption of positive living. This results in a cathartic experience and relieves children from the feelings of sadness that they had earlier on experienced because of Nyaketo’s suffering, as well as the pain she had caused her family. In the questionnaire, Patricia Chepkoech, a Standard Seven pupil at St. Theresa Primary, echoed what most respondents felt. She asserted:

I like stories with a good ending. The ending of *Kesani* is good because Nyaketo is well. She has been treated and did not die. She also has a new job.

As demonstrated in this section, the hopeful resolutions of plot play a prominent role in enhancing the comprehension of appropriate themes in the selected texts. The development of such optimistic endings is also a main feature that
distinguishes children’s fiction from adults’ literature. Babbitt (158) acknowledges happy conclusions as a prerequisite in children’s fiction. She argues that authors of children’s books, to portray something profound that turns stories ultimately towards hope rather than resignation, should skillfully construct such endings. This is the aspect depicted in the selected texts. Besides, there is a new realisation about HIV/AIDS after reading the selected texts. Most respondents expressed their confidence that the disease is a manageable medical condition. Through recourse to counselling, medical treatment and meaningful means of sustenance, life for the infected can be restored to a semblance of order. The sentiments acknowledged by the children justify Rosenblatt’s transactional theory which suggests that literature may lead to a sharpened understanding of ourselves and society:

The literary transaction in itself may become a self-liberating process, and the sharing of our responses may be an even greater means of overcoming our limitations of personality and experience. ("The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work", 33-53).

This view suggests that images presented in children’s stories have a great influence on the child’s moral and social development and can alter the readers’ worldview. Additionally, the selected storybooks teach children new perceptions on how to deal with predicaments occasioned by HIV/AIDS. The lessons affirmed by the children who read the selected texts justify the uses of transactional reader response theory in analysing children’s responses to fiction. Rosenblatt’s transactional reader response refers to the contributions of both the reader and the text during the reading process. Rosenblatt (Literature as Exploration, 34) adds that the transactional encounter makes the reader and the literary work to fashion out a new poem, which alludes to the new insights the readers get after reading a work of art. As evidenced in
the responses from the respondents, the selected texts enable them to learn worthwhile lessons from the stories they read.

3.2. PACIFYING THEMES

This section argues that there is a deliberate use of pacifying themes in the selected stories. This use of pacifying themes is a palliative technique used by the authors to enhance acceptance of the selected texts and pass messages related to HIV/AIDS in an ingenious manner. There is deliberate juxtaposition of pacifying themes with disturbing ideas. Martin in an online article ("Using Books to Heal Gifted Students") notes that for stories to be used for palliative purposes, they should have diverse characters and creative and realistic solutions to predicaments presented. In addition, Martin adds that the books should be relevant to the children to enable them to stimulate the children’s thinking capacities. On the other hand, Benton and Fox (Teaching Literature to: Nine to Fourteen, 1985) examine responses of children to stories and poems and observe that children identify themselves with characters in narratives and this influences the sort of images they make out of the stories, hence the need for positive images or themes in children’s literary works.

In the selected texts, one such pacifying theme is hope, even in the face of HIV/AIDS infection. Hope results from adoption of the principle of positive living. It portrays HIV/AIDS as a manageable medical condition rather than a death sentence. Early detection and proper management suggest this hopeful stance. The authors’ aims are to show that optimism is crucial in sustaining the infected through the challenges of coping with HIV/AIDS. It makes those infected with HIV appreciate feelings of wellbeing.
Hope is associated with symbolic characters like Fina, Nyaketo and Kathesya, who upon receiving treatment and counselling, resolve to have a new beginning. The texts depict HIV/AIDS as manageable, if a person receives proper medication and counselling. This representation pacifies the child readers who may have been emotionally tormented by the depiction of distressing themes in the selected texts. This appeasement is exemplified in a response by Amos Kiplangat', a Standard Seven pupil at St. Theresa Primary School. He describes the effect that the character Fina had on him thus:

I admire Fina. She is brave. She heeded the words of the counsellor and went back to school, although other pupils had insulted her that slim smells because she has AIDS. I learnt from her to have hope and courage when faced with challenges.

Previously, most pupils had expressed their sorrow for Fina because she had HIV/AIDS. Most respondents had remarked that it was cruel of the author to depict her as a HIV/AIDS victim. Fina's resolve to go to school after counselling demonstrates to the pupils that despite HIV/AIDS infection, life goes on.

Hopeful characters like Fina pacify readers by showing the attainment of optimism through seeking spiritual solace from God, family and friends. The authors of the selected texts show that those infected with HIV/AIDS realize hope when they have access to a source of income, appreciation and acceptance by family and society. Kathesya and Nyaketo, who secure jobs after receiving treatment and counselling, inspire children to have new perspectives on HIV/AIDS. The pupils who read the selected texts concurred with these sentiments as illustrated by Cynthia Akinyi who is in Standard Eight at Wankan Academy. Akinyi, on her remarks about Nyaketo, concurs with this assertion as shown below:
Nyaketo is the character I like. She prays to God to give her a second chance in life when she tested positive. I learnt from her that those with HIV/AIDS should seek help from God, family and friends. They can also get a job like the one she gets at TASO centre. I used to think that those who have HIV/AIDS should sell their property and eat all the money quickly before they die. Now I have known from her that life can still go on for them.

Therefore, the authors use some characters to show that hope results when there is access to treatment and care, leading to a return to good health. Hence, the deliberate depiction of the optimistic stance adopted by Fina, Nyaketo and Kathesya who seek for treatment and counselling and adopt positive living. They are meant to offer optimistic imagery to children reading the selected books.

Furthermore, the selected texts aim to pacify the readers by showing that society can cope with the onslaught of HIV/AIDS through provision of comprehensive HIV/AIDS education for the youth. Although HIV/AIDS has largely been perceived as a dreaded terminal illness rapidly wiping out the young generation, the selected texts aim to paint a positive picture by pointing out to the pupils that education on HIV/AIDS is the most economical and effective means of HIV prevention. HIV/AIDS education raises the awareness on HIV/AIDS, its modes of transmission and preventive measures. Crosse recognizes the powerful pedagogical role that literature plays in society:

Literature is and has been through ages the great medium of thought transference. It is the mighty stronghold wherein are kept the gems of intellect.... In its depths are reflected joys, sorrow, hope and despair - every emotion that recorded life has known. (925).

Literature is therefore crucial in shaping children’s reasoning, character, behaviour, and even aids them to work out difficulties they are going through. Hence, we concur
with Crosse by asserting that the selected texts have educational value for the children.

The pupils who studied the texts were in agreement with the declaration that the selected texts deliberately inculcate a positive stand with the aim of persuading its readers to have a particular attitude. Most of the pupils extensively referred to the last sections of the books as being very informative and educative. These sections had short quizzes on HIV/AIDS and summarised notes on the causes, spread and impact of HIV/AIDS. Rosenblatt (Literature as Exploration, 32-33), in her proposals on the importance of Transactional Reader Response Theory in literary criticism, argues that readers go through a text with two distinct aims in mind. These aims are reading for efferent purposes where the focus is on acquiring the information contained in the text, while aesthetic reading denotes that one reads for the pleasurable experience offered by the text due to its imaginative exploitation of language. Additionally, Tyson (158) declares that aesthetic reading is evaluative because the reader makes judgments about the text's themes and style. The students' comments therefore justify Rosenblatt's observations about the nature of a reader's experience of a text. Lillian Awino, who is a Standard Eight pupil at Emmanuel Academy, concurs with this assertion:

I read all the three books I was given. What I liked most about the books is that they are short and have brief notes at the end. I have learnt from them that to avoid AIDS, I should abstain from sex. I also learnt not to fear AIDS because it does not spread through handshakes, hugging or sharing utensils. I again learnt that the best way to avoid AIDS is to wait until I finish school and then test with my partner before marriage.
In addition to lauding the texts for acquainting them with new perspectives on HIV/AIDS, most pupils wished they could read other books in the same category. Most respondents expressed approval of the selected texts saying that they had dreaded HIV/AIDS before they read the books. Moses Kiprono is a Standard Eight pupil at Ndanai Primary. He illustrates this, as shown:

I used to fear HIV/AIDS before. I did not think that there were interesting stories about such a dangerous subject. I will ensure I read other books to learn more. I like Fina. She is strong and brave. When she learnt that she had HIV/AIDS, she did not give up in life. She was counselled and became confident and formed 'be a friend club'. I wish we could form the same club in our school to educate us on HIV/AIDS.

This means that the children are hungry for more reading material on HIV/AIDS. These reading resources will empower them with adequate knowledge to help protect them from the risk of being infected. Furthermore, access to a wide range of content on HIV/AIDS would aid the children to fight against stigma and discrimination in the family, society and in the school environment. Moreover, appropriate and well-written literary texts would pacify them by deliberately demonstrating that they can cope with the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS, if they get adequate and relevant education. Steig (19-23) shows the importance of fiction to children for its provisions of pleasure and escape from distressing circumstances. Additionally, he demonstrates that children read to get insights into their behaviour as well as that of others. Steig further argues that children read in a quest to get information in a more compelling manner through fiction than through non-literary texts. His sentiments concur with the remarks by the children who are lauding the selected texts for having a positive influence on their perceptions on the theme of HIV/AIDS.
Another pacifying theme realized is communal rallying in the face of the devastations caused by HIV/AIDS. In *Love*, Ndalama reveals to us how people from his community came together to deliberate on how to form a committee to educate the public on means of tackling the HIV/AIDS menace. The members of this committee represent positive stereotyping to enable the child readers identify with the values they represent and feel a sense of safety. This is because HIV/AIDS is a fearsome theme. The presence of the committee reassures the child that adults will be there to protect him and he/she will feel safe to read on. It also demonstrates that HIV/AIDS can be tackled through sustained community involvement. Festus Bwari, a Standard Six pupil at Emmanuel Academy, depicts this claim in his response to *Love*:

"I like the committee formed in the story. They will fight HIV and I did not feel scared because I wanted to find out how they were fighting the disease."

In *Kesani*, communal rallying is depicted by the presence of Mrs. Nambi, Kesani’s teacher. Her presence looms large as the plot unfolds. She symbolically portrays reassurance, concern and care for the nervous Kesani. These are the pacifying themes deliberately portrayed by the author in *Kesani*. Mrs. Nambi tells Kesani, “If you ever want to share your problem with somebody, just come and speak to me...”(2). Children who read the texts and responded to the interview also expressed the same opinions. In addition, they keenly identified the illustration depicting Mrs. Nambi in conversation with Kesani. They proclaimed that they liked the picture because it showed Mrs. Nambi comforting Kesani since Nyaketo was sick and linked it to her caring role in the text (see list of illustrations, 115). Although HIV/AIDS is alluded to, vicariously, the child reader feels Mrs. Nambi’s
characterisation and is reassured. As a character, she depicts pacifying themes like affection, care and concern.

Furthermore, the presence of Kesani's aunt, Tendo, is comforting. She provides a sense of familial concern that close relatives bring when they come to share our calamities. Familial reassurance is essential to deal with the ravages of HIV/AIDS. The omniscient narrator in Kesani reveals to us Tendo's concern. She says:

...The girl is so sick... it is better to do whatever you can for her here...I will try to send you some money for food next week. Please, Kabaro trust in God. (7).

The children applauded this pacifying theme. Amos Kiplagat, who is in Standard Six at Manaret Primary School, added, "I like Aunt Tendo because she comes when Nyaketo is sick. She brings comfort and Kesani's mother is not alone any more". These words echo the author's key intention to transform the attitude that society often displays towards individuals infected with HIV/AIDS and their families. Society has often shunned or abandoned them altogether.

In Fina, Fina's predicament had disturbed the child readers interviewed, as explained before. They had fretted about her fate. When Fina goes back to school, after the revelation of her HIV positive status by Mondo, she faces further challenges. However, Miss Kisa and Kemba who are Fina's friends, act as bulwarks of support. These two characters additionally demonstrate the pacifying themes of care and support from friends. Additionally, the children interviewed positively commented on Fina's efforts to wage war against HIV/AIDS by forming an HIV/AIDS education club aptly named 'Be a Friend Club'. When interviewed, Aaron Kipkoech, a Standard
Seven pupil at St. Theresa Primary School, described the effect the character Fina had on him thus:

I admire Fina. She is brave. She formed a club to fight HIV. I learnt from her that pupils could defeat HIV/AIDS by forming a club like hers.

These words affirm that creative solutions can end the catastrophes caused by HIV/AIDS. They also reveal that children can play a critical role in the fight against HIV/AIDS. When Fina founded the HIV/AIDS society, ‘Be a Friend Club’, to educate pupils on the causes, spread and impact of HIV/AIDS, she proves that children can actively fight against HIV/AIDS. Child readers bond with her. This bonding confirms Tucker’s (19) assertion that children love heroes who overcome difficult challenges and depict a degree of heroism in their deeds.

This chapter has demonstrated how deliberate patterning of plot and use of pacifying themes aided pupils to gain wholesome lessons about HIV/AIDS. Plot brings about a cathartic relief. Plot first demonstrates a sense of despair due to suffering occasioned by ravages of HIV/AIDS. The disease causes extreme pain, destitution and psychological distress. The victims endure stigma, discrimination and abandonment. The children expressed sorrow at the depiction of these themes. As the plot unfolds, the authors of the selected texts deliberately use some characters to solve the disturbing themes. Denouements in plot enable a happy resolution. The vexing themes such as economic distress, abandonment, stigma and discrimination have been resolved. This brings about cathartic relief. Pacifying themes appease feelings of the child readers by demonstrating positive values in spite of the difficulties caused by HIV/AIDS. These are hope, care, concern, and acceptance of the affected by family and society. These pacifying themes again include communal rallying to fight
HIV/AIDS and restoration of the infected to good health by recourse to the treatment and adoption of the principle of positive living. The deliberate illustrations of these themes pacify the child readers by demonstrating that HIV/AIDS is a manageable medical ailment. This is by resorting to values deliberately depicted by the authors of the selected texts.

The preceding two chapters have demonstrated responses of children to HIV/AIDS and devices that enabled children to read the selected books meaningfully. The next chapter explores devices that may have hindered them from comprehending appropriate themes associated with HIV/AIDS in the selected texts.
CHAPTER FOUR

FACTORS THAT HINDERED CHILDREN FROM COMPREHENDING GRUESOME THEMES

4.0. INTRODUCTION

While in the preceding chapters we have explored devices that made children to comprehend gruesome themes, there are also factors that made them unable to figure out the appropriate themes in the selected stories. Here, we explore the devices that hindered the children from getting the intended message. We specifically study gory descriptions, illustrations, symbolism and complex satire.

Several scholars such as Edward Ardizzone, Maurice Sendak, Marcia Brown, Roger Duvoisin and Smith have commented on the role of illustrations in children's fiction. Ardizzone (Children and Literature, 170) comments that, “the text can only give bones to the story. The pictures on the other hand must do more than just illustrate the story. They must elaborate it. Characters have to be created pictorially because there is no space to do so verbally in the text. Besides the settings and characters, the subtleties of mood and movement have to be suggested.” Sendak (Children and Literature, 170) notes that illustrations should not be a showcase for artists nor should they express lack of creativity, substance and purpose but should help the author to enhance meaning. Marcia Brown (Children and Literature, 171) also criticises illustrators for lack of creativity and growth in their art. He urges them to experiment. Duvoisin (Children and Literature, 177-178) cautions artists against the
tendency to moralise and teach in children’s illustrations. He points out that didacticism actually makes the illustrations and the texts boring. Duvoisin argues for illustrations that tell the story with simplicity, verve, clarity and impact as this will eliminate what makes a page difficult to read by a child. He concludes that illustrations should therefore educate a child’s taste and visual sense. Cass (10) is of the opinion that “…sadism, torture and macabre horror have no place in children’s stories”. He adds that sometimes, adults who illustrate books for children may provoke horror and fear that the writer may not have envisioned. On the other hand, Hunt (3) shows that illustrations can play a powerful role because they are direct and simple; and can tell and show the story. Hunt advocates for all children’s books to have illustrations. Segun (25-27) comments on the utilization of illustrations by Nigerian authors. She notes the perpetuation of stereotypes like the depiction of advancement in years as an age of decrepitude, where an old person is drawn in an ugly manner, with spine bent, and walking with a stick. She identifies Sophocles’s riddle in the text Oedipus in which this question is put: “What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon and three legs in the evening?” The answer to this riddle is, “Man, because he crawls on all fours as a baby, walks on two legs while in his prime and with the aid of a stick (the third “leg”) when he grows old.” Segun recognizes that the riddle does not appreciate that with provision of modern medical care and good nutrition, some senior citizens are healthy and active. She urges illustrators to be keen and avoid such negative stereotypes.

On the other hand, critics have also commented on the uses of symbolism in fiction. Reynolds, in an online text (Introduction to the Great Gatsby), identifies the
use of symbolism in *The Great Gatsby* where some characters are viewed as symbolising certain ideas or themes. Reynolds mentions that these characters extend the ideas in the book. Examples include the representation of capitalistic greed as shown in the text by characters like Gatsby and Tom Buchanan.

Having therefore identified critics' views on use of some stylistic strategies in fiction, we next look at the use of description, illustrations, symbolism and satire in the selected texts.

### 4.1. GORY DESCRIPTIONS

Some of the authors like Mulwa use gory and scaring descriptions in the selected texts. These descriptions are alarming to the pupils and it reinforces some of the stereotypes associated with HIV/AIDS. Such uses seem to negate critics' recommendations on literary portrayals. Hunt counsels on the need for careful portrayals in literary texts:

> The structure of a text and language choices can tell something about the society in which the texts themselves are rooted, and that an awareness of patterns of textual structure and of language choices may provide information about how the writer wants his or her readers to view society. (263).

Hunt observes that particular usage of any stylistic devices is expressions of the author’s vision for that society, hence the need for wholesome stylistic choices by authors. Love seems to flout this counsel by Hunt. Ndalama, the first person narrator, describes to us the ailing Kathesya as follows:

> There was a sound behind the curtain that immediately caught our attention. It was not a laughing sound, a crying sound, a scrapping sound or a whispering sound... It was the sound of a gurgle, followed by a long wheeze. Then another tortured sound like the sound of a
covered pot full of pumpkins, boiling and bubbling on fire. (17).

This is a stereotypical description of Kathesya. It is as though her demise is nigh. The description is scaring and misleading to the child readers. It is not true that all HIV positive people are weak in the manner the author depicts Kathesya in the above description. Some look healthy, although they have HIV/AIDS. The author further describes Kathesya in a horrific manner, as shown:

However, what lay on that bed was horror and as different from the bedding as heaven is to hell. It was the remains of what had been a tall woman; she had shrivelled to skin and bone. The figure lay facing us, the eyes sunken and almost fluid like still water in a dirty cup. (19).

The stylistic feature quoted above can be described as foregrounded. Foregrounding refers to stylistic devices that break the norm of normal writing. The function of foregrounding is to make strange to achieve defamiliarization. Viktor Shklovsky (quoted in Miall and Kiuken, 1994) argues that foregrounding “serves the purpose of creating a special perception of the object - it creates a 'vision' of the object instead of serving as a means for knowing it”(18). Kuiken and Miall (“Beyond text theory”, 1994), who are renowned Reader Response critics, make a case that foregrounded aspects in literary works are a predictor of both readers’ reading time and their judgments of striking-ness and feelings aroused by them. The two scholars suggest that literary responses follow a distinctive course in which foregrounding affects the reader’s reactions to particular aspects in literary texts. Miall and Kuiken are therefore suggesting that an encounter with fore-grounded features shape the interpretive efforts of readers due to their power to make strange and striking particular aspects in literary works. Although foregrounding may not always results in negative results, in the context in Love then, the description given above makes Kathesya looks like an alien
human being because she has AIDS and as result influences the children's attitude to her. Additionally, Purves and Beach (36) assert that a reader's interactions with a work of art may continue long after the individual has finished reading a text. Thus, the description used by Mulwa is likely to linger in the minds of the children for a substantial period because it is strange. Indeed, some of the respondents commented that Kathesya was on the verge of death because the author had suggested so. This implies that the description aroused negative feelings in its readers. The aversion for the literary piece above is likely to have an effect on the readers' choice of the particular text. Fry (10) confirms that children have a tendency of rereading a text several times in the process of familiarisation. Thus, if the description given above arouses negative feelings in them, they are unlikely to pick the text again. Furthermore, Miall ("Beyond the schema given", 1989) demonstrates that readers' emotions play a critical role in unravelling meaning in a work of fiction. This suggests that feelings experienced by readers during their reading sessions enable them to track the relationship between the local details of a text and their sense of the work as a whole. Additionally, Miall and Kuiken ("Foregrounding, defamiliarization, and affect", 1994) reason that positive emotions in fiction make the reader identify with the protagonist who performs an active role, as in love or curiosity. Negative emotions, however, arouse reactive reactions. Therefore, in the depiction of negative themes, the reader is cast in the antagonist's role, as in fear or grief. In conclusion of the argument in this section a gory description such as the one about Kathesya leads to reactive reactions of fear because of her condition. This negates the overall aim of the texts on HIV/AIDS, which was to dispel fear associated with the ravages of the disease.
The author’s description of Kathesya is ghastly. It encourages stereotypical attitudes towards HIV/AIDS patients. It depicts their condition as horrifying. Such attitude eventually leads to stigma and discrimination. The description symbolises devaluation of lives of people infected with HIV/AIDS. The author, and by extension society, depicts them as horrifying monsters. Wetherill (133) warns authors against getting too preoccupied with a particular aspect of style at the expense of meaning, thus diluting the intended implication. The author of Love should have therefore avoided graphic descriptions, as there are other methods of conveying meaning, without necessarily being too explicit.

Some of the pupils remarked about the description above that Kathesya was going to die soon. Sam Kipruto, who is in Standard Six at St. Theresa Academy, illustrates this. He expressed his feelings about Kathesya’s imminent demise as shown: “Kathesya will die. Ndalama says only remains are left of her. AIDS patients always look like that and all of them die.” This comment suggests that HIV/AIDS is conclusively a terminal illness. It negates the message the texts aim to inculcate that HIV/AIDS is a manageable illness, if people seek prompt treatment and adopt positive living.

The description is hardly necessary. On comparison of the three texts studied, Fina and Kesani do not utilise dreadful descriptions, but this does not dilute their overall message. The pupils did not cite any gory descriptions in them. The description is then a shortcoming on the side of the author of Love when the texts are compared. The author could have been aiming at creating a lasting impression through vivid description, but his portrayal encourages stigma and discrimination.
Compare this with the description of Nyaketo in Kesani: “Nyaketo gathered her reserves of strength and spoke quite clearly…” (12) or, “Nyaketo paused as she was hit by a spasm of coughing. She sipped some water and continued…” (12). The examples quoted above show a deliberate attempt to tone down the description, while at the same time depicting feelings of helplessness on the side of the character. It also arouses feelings of sympathy on the part of the reader, for Nyaketo. Empathy for Nyaketo is achieved without resorting to gory descriptions utilised in Love.

To sum up the issues raised in this section, authors should avoid such renderings. Tucker (The Child and the Book: A Psychological and Literary Exploration, 1991) investigates the psychological appeal of any particular book to children and calls for literary sensitivity when writing for the young. Tucker adds that literary sensitivity encompasses skills, which an author utilises in order to capture various psychological and imaginative needs of his readers (ibid, 13). This calls for a careful choice of language and content presented, depending on the level of the children’s perception and understanding of life. Additionally, Hollindale (23), a critic of children’s literature, asserts that a good children’s book should explore uncharted, sensitive and painful themes which children are likely to face in life. However, he cautions that authors should not be too relentless and savagely honest in writing for children and adolescents, to the point of exposing so much frightening possibilities that the effect is to deepen half-felt insecurities. The children criticised the description given in Love because of the shortcomings mentioned above. It was not therefore necessary for the author to make use of such ghastly descriptions.
4.2. GRUESOME ILLUSTRATIONS

As shown in the introduction to this chapter, illustrations in children’s books should be clear to appeal to them. They should also be appropriate to the story. Illustrations again should enhance and exemplify the intended meaning(s) in a text. They should not distort the intended message. Author/illustrator Chris Manson and the critic Marilyn Courtot (Children’s Literature, 1995) believe that illustrations should be in balance with the story and enlarge its focus, without distorting its meanings.

Most of the illustrations in the selected texts are useful and informative. However, some of them are horrific and communicate negative messages. They distort the authors’ themes in the story. Some suggest death is impending for those ailing from HIV/AIDS. The illustration on the cover of Love did not please some of the pupils interviewed. They described it as ugly and gave reasons why they did not approve of it (see list of illustrations, 108). A number of pupils reported that the person shown is dying. Others held the view that people by the bedside of the sick person were relatives who had come to bid the ailing individual farewell before his death. Alfred Kibet is in Standard Seven at Ndanai Primary. He commented, “I dislike the picture on the cover of the page. It shows a person dying of AIDS”.

In Kesani such an illustration is also utilised. There is a gruesome picture of a supposedly ailing Nyaketo (see list of illustrations, 107). Some of the pupils again echoed that they did not like this picture. They criticised the picture because it aroused in them feelings of revulsions and apathy towards patients infected with
HIV/AIDS. The illustration also suggested that the person was on the last stages of an HIV/AIDS infection because she looked thin and ghostly. Actually, the two illustrations are hardly necessary. They also express lack of creativity on the side of the artists. Compare, for example, some of the insensitive illustrations used earlier in a bid to fight HIV/AIDS (see lists of illustrations, 111). Such illustrations depict HIV/AIDS as horror. They laid the foundation for stigma and discrimination against individuals infected with HIV/AIDS. Again, they depict lack of creativity. Critics contend that illustrators should be creative and original in their art. The art expressed in literary works should not be a cut and paste affair from one text to the other. Brown and Sendak (Children and Literature, 177-178) argue for creativity and growth in children’s illustrations. The illustrations given above therefore show a lack of creativity as shown by the similarity between them and other illustrations previously used in an attempt to fight HIV/AIDS. The prevalence of negative attitudes towards individuals infected and affected by HIV/AIDS demonstrates that such insensitive art engendered persistent negative attitudes in society towards HIV/AIDS, which the passage of time has not modified. In as much as the aims of the artists were to arouse fear about HIV/AIDS in children and influence their behaviour change, such mode of learning is the least effective. Compare the illustrations mentioned above with the sensitive illustration (list of illustrations, 110) from Avert, the international AIDS charity dedicated to HIV/AIDS education. Again, the illustrations in the texts Love and Kesani express the desire to moralise and teach through fear. Arguably, the illustration from Avert demonstrates empathy and teaches the need for love and concern for those who are infected without being gory. In addition, it conveys that HIV/AIDS does not spread through normal day-to-day human interactions, without
necessarily seeking to instil fear. Therefore, illustrators should strive to make use of sensitively created designs which express creativity and inform the child, without the need to be didactic and moralistic. Duvoisin (Children and Literature, 177-178) concurs with these sentiments when he affirms that didacticism exploited in children’s illustrations actually makes them (illustrations) and the texts boring. Duvoisin urges for simplicity and clarity in children’s art as this enriches their taste and visual sense.

In conclusion of the issues in this section, publishers should ensure that illustrations are appropriate. They should not be gory, as this distorts the overall message of the authors, who may not have influence on the choice of illustrations used, or interpretations of the texts that an illustrator makes. Artists should therefore heed Courtot’s (1995) counsel that the functions of illustrations in children’s fiction are to enlarge the story, without distorting it.

4.3. MISUNDERSTANDING OF CHARACTER REPRESENTATION

Some literary texts can use certain characters as representative of a certain group of people. Such a development of character representation is illustrated in Richard Wright’s Native Son (1940) where Bigger Thomas is often viewed as representative of young black men in America in the 1930s, subjected to destitution and exploitation. In the fiction selected for this study, we also explore how characters are depicted to represent certain types of individuals.

In the texts selected for this study, the authors use characters as representative of certain specific themes. There are two sets of stock characters in the selected storybooks. These are the good stock characters epitomising wholesome values and the bad stock characters used to signify vices that are prevalent in society. The
intentions of the authors are to use characterisation to discourage vices associated with the onslaught of HIV/AIDS in society and encourage instead appropriate values that mitigate the onset of the disease. It was thus the expectations of the authors of the selected texts that all the pupils would identify with characters who represent virtue in the selected stories. However, despite these expectations, there were instances where the pupils interviewed identified with the characters who represent negative values. This made them to misconstrue the message intended because of failure to identify with characters that denote wholesome values. The pupils then identified with characters that signify negative values like stigma, discrimination, inhumanity and cruelty that the selected texts had intended to condemn by contrasting characters signifying these themes with those that negate them.

In *Fina*, for example, Mondo and Nyamata represent pupils who are callous and cruel towards people infected with HIV/AIDS. Their character traits contrast with the depiction of Kemba as a friendly and likeable person. Mondo and Nyamata discriminate against Fina for being HIV positive. They openly stigmatize Fina and refuse to have any physical contact with her. Therefore, their attitudes contrast with the friendly and stigma free stance of Kemba, Fina’s best friend, who remains a loyal companion even in the face of the revelation of Fina’s HIV/AIDS status.

In *Love*, the characterisation of Kathesya’s father is deliberate. He is discriminative and hostile towards Kathesya who is HIV positive. The author uses him as a symbol of parents who are biased against their children who could be HIV positive. He therefore represents discrimination, bias and cruelty. The attitude of Kathesya’s father contrasts with the loving and caring stance of Kathesya’s mother who vows that despite her shortcomings, Kathesya still needed love and concern to
enable her overcome the ravages of HIV/AIDS. Kathesya’s mother is therefore a depiction of caring and concerned relatives who do not discriminate against those people living with HIV/AIDS.

We therefore expect pupils to condemn the characters who are delineated to depict individuals in society who practise the vices mentioned above against HIV/AIDS patients. Condemnation of such characters was the norm in most of the responses. The pupils deplored characters that are associated with discrimination, sexual immorality that leads to HIV/AIDS and cruelty leading to abandonment of patients because they are HIV positive. However, there are also pupils who identified with the bad stock characters who signify individuals biased either against those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. The authors expected that the pupils would never identify with these negative characters. The tenets of the Cognitive Development Theory help to explain the discrepancy identified above. In his studies on human intellectual development, Piaget reasoned that children’s reasoning faculties are qualitatively different from those of adults (Huitte and Hummel, 1). Therefore, not all children express mature concepts that adults affirm. Marshall (46) explains that the period Piaget identified as Formal Operation Stage (Age 11 and beyond) is characterized by advancing intellectual development, where children acquire the necessary mental skills to conceive of complex knowledge, but some children are likely to reason differently. Davis (18) explains that at the formal operational stage, some children still show thinking more typical of the preceding stage (The Concrete Operation stage, age 7-11), while other brighter children will be well advanced in their conception of such difficult concepts. This helps to explain the discrepancy in the meanings the children made.
In *Love*, for example, some of the pupils believed that it was right for Kathesya’s father to disown her because she disobeyed him and ran away with a lover. These pupils are therefore identifying with negative values that Kathesya’s father signifies. Other pupils also added that the illness Kathesya contracted was a just punishment from God for sexual immorality. Tom King’ara is in Standard Five at Manaret Primary and he wrote thus:

Kathesya’s father is right to deny her as his daughter. She ran away from school. Then she got HIV/AIDS. She should be left to die alone.

This response seems to regard HIV/AIDS as punishment for running away from school. It is likely that ignorant society has induced the respondent above to regard HIV/AIDS as punishment. This is because children pick values society introduces to them. Albert Bandura’s (1977) observations about how children learn vindicate this. He pointed out that the environment has a significant role in shaping children’s behaviours, thoughts and attitudes, as children model their behaviours and opinions according to influence exerted by significant others, which means adults and society in general. Again, Babendreier (*AIDS Education for the Youth, 2000*) argues that it is wrong to think of HIV/AIDS as punishment from God. He demonstrates that HIV/AIDS is a natural consequence of promiscuity; just as drug addiction makes an addict miserable. God does not cause the misery affecting the addict.

The notion that HIV/AIDS infection is punishment from God relates to early perceptions of the disease as chastisement from God for sexual immorality. During the advent of HIV/AIDS, the disease was mostly associated with sexual immorality and sex for money. Society still perpetuates this concept, for when the children voice their reasoning; the thinking in the society influences them. Emmy Chesang, who is in
Standard Five at Manaret Primary, agrees with this stance below:

I learnt from Nyaketo that God punishes people who have sex before marriage. They get HIV/AIDS.

This response is insensitive. It perpetuates stigma and discrimination. Furthermore, it displays ignorance propagated by incorrect HIV/AIDS education. It does not acknowledge existence of other means of HIV/AIDS transmission like blood transfusions and even mother to child transmission. The pupil mentioned above is then identifying with characters that denote bad values in society. Tucker (Writers, Critics and Children, 177-180) explains such kinds of contrary perceptions when he establishes that children's moral view of life regards events in a manner where everything fits into place. Children thus would regard the characters in the texts as either good or bad; and some of the children would not accommodate the idea that characters can make a mistake and still be good at the same time. Therefore, some of the children viewed those individuals who are infected with HIV/AIDS as being bad or immoral; hence they were infected, without considering other circumstantial evidence.

Other responses justified rejection because of the perception of HIV/AIDS as a terminal illness. In Fina, Mr. Sunday's characterisation is deliberate. The author uses him to stand for people in society who prey on children for sexual favours. In addition, the school setting where he operates is again used to depict that sexual exploitation of minors is prevalent in some learning institutions. Therefore, Mr. Sunday represents sexual predators that exploit minors in schools. He stands for vices like sexual exploitations, cruelty and bias against people with HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, both Mr. Sunday and Benson are used as representative of individuals
who discriminate against people infected with HIV/AIDS. These two characters disown Fina when they learn she has HIV/AIDS. Neema Mbuva, a Standard Eight pupil at Emmanuel Academy, ironically concurred with Mr. Sunday’s behaviour, as shown:

I like Mr. Sunday because he is a clever man. He stops loving Fina who has AIDS. Fina cannot make a good wife because she will give birth to sick children.

This response is not cognizant of the fact that Mr. Sunday is a dangerous sexual predator. He is preying on Fina and yet he is her teacher. This is against societal norms. On the other hand, in Fina, the author depicts Benson as a sly opportunist. He asks Fina for her hand in friendship, only to turn back and cruelly write to her, “I am told you have slim. Forget the poem I wrote to you. I no longer love you.”(28). Benson is an illustration of uncouth and discriminative individuals. The words he utters represent vile values associated with a section of society that practises them against individuals unfortunate to be HIV positive. The author is satirising Benson by displaying him as the epitome of unreliability, despite his early avowal of love for Fina. The author does not wish us to identify with the base values that Benson symbolises. It is once more ironic for some of the pupils to identify with the loathsome values that Mr. Sunday and Benson epitomize. Therefore, we surmise it is because of failure to comprehend what these characters signify that the interviewees applauded these two characters. As pointed out by Adrian Pilkington (1991) in “Poetic Effect” in Literary Pragmatics, readers can at times misconstrue the author’s intentions. Pilkington comments that the author’s intentions in a text forms clear implicature, while in between are a variety of meanings that readers can make of ideas in a work of fiction. This may also help to explain why some of the pupils identified
with Mr. Sunday, Benson and Kathesya’s father who represent bad individuals in society. The author’s intention was to satirise these characters for their vices. However, there are readers who made these characters their heroes thus we can argue that they misunderstood the authors’ intentions.

4.4. FAILURE TO COMPREHEND SATIRE

Another factor that may have hindered children from comprehending some of the themes is exploitation of satire. As explained by Huck (13) and Tucker (11), children do not appreciate sophisticated satire or sarcasm because they lack the appropriate literary expertise and historical perspectives to exploit in interpretation of such stylistic devices. This is because children are perplexed by the need to distinguish between the surface and deep meaning of words that such stylistic aspects entail.

The authors of the selected texts use satire in their fiction. However, some of the pupils actually failed to comprehend the satire. Among the characters that are satirised include Mondo, Mr. Sunday, Benson and Kathesya’s father for their inappropriate behaviour towards people infected with HIV/AIDS. As explained in the section on symbolism, these characters therefore made the pupils not to comprehend some of the intended messages because they could not decipher the intended symbol.

In addition to this stylistics device, there are other characters being satirised by the authors of the selected texts, and again the pupils failed to interpret the satire. Such characters include Fina’s mother and the children in Mateso Town who are harassing Sadaka, Kathesya’s boy. There are also pupils who saw nothing wrong with Kathesya’s decision to have a lover who eventually infected her with HIV (refer to
In *Fina*, the author satirises Fina’s mother for her failure to inform Fina on good time that she had HIV/AIDS. In the text *Fina*, she tells Fina that, “This is a family secret” (5). She (Fina’s mother) never informs her that she is ailing from HIV/AIDS. Fina’s bewilderment is aptly captured during the moment when Mondo has just revealed to the entire school that Fina has HIV/AIDS. In *Fina*, the omniscient narrator reports, “Fina felt dizzy...she fainted ...” (26). Although Mrs. Kyooma, Fina’s mother apologises for her misdeed, it is too late to save Fina from the embarrassment she suffers. Fina’s mother may have had good intentions in her decision not to reveal that they were HIV positive because she feared the ensuing stigma. A confession that one is HIV positive has cataclysmic consequences for one’s personal and communal identity for. Susan Sontag (24-25) observes on the nature of being HIV positive that “to get AIDS is precisely to be revealed ... as a member of a certain ‘risk group’, a community of pariahs. The illness flushes out an identity that might have remained hidden from the neighbors, job mates, family, and friends”. This may have been the motivation why she chose to keep their status secret. Some of the pupils therefore ended up concurring with the decision by Fina’s mother to be secretive about Fina’s status.

In *Love*, some of the pupils concurred with the values some of the children in Mateso Town practise. The children in there are reported to be harassing Sadaka. Ndalama, the first person narrator reports, “In front of us, a group of ten or so children were singing and harassing a young boy. The boy was at the centre of the ring they had formed around him as they sang and mocked him” (13). The children justify themselves by saying that, “Because his mother is bad! She has slim. He too will slim
like her! Maama says we keep away from him. We should not enter his home! They carry the curse ugh!”(13-14).

The aims of the authors are to satirise these characters for their negative behaviour. Their conduct is not worth emulating. They represent vices that the selected texts condemn and wishes the pupils would never identify with them. Mostly, the respondents condemned these characters because they identified the negative themes they signify. However, there are pupils who failed to realise that these set of characters were delineated in such a manner so as to discourage the themes they represent. The most likely reasons why the pupils failed to comprehend the criticism of these characters is because they were unsuccessful in making sense of the satire exploited by the authors. It was not surprising to find responses that were in concurrence with the negative values they depict, especially, in class five and six. Some of the pupils would comment, for example, that they saw nothing wrong with misdeeds associated with the characters we have mentioned.

The reasons can be attributed to failure to understand satire properly. Again, Tucker (10), quoting Piaget, writes that children tend to see the workings of the universe in terms of what Piaget has described as imminent justice whereby everything is thought to work out according to sound moral law, with rewards for the good and punishment for the bad. Tucker comments, “some more sophisticated literary approaches which practised adults readers can usually understand quite quickly - such as satire, which often superficially exhibits a moral aimlessness as a cover for criticism of society – will still very much puzzle young readers” (11). Moreover, Tucker confirms that children get confused because they cannot comprehend that surface meaning of words can also have a deeper implication. Again,
he notes that even adults have a difficulty with the same stylistic strategies. In addition, Tucker justifies that although children prefer idealised reflections of their own good self-images in literature, yet at the same time, they also sympathise with characters that stand in for some of their own less mature or acceptable feelings or fantasies. This also explains why they may love and hate their parents at the same time (ibid: 20). The most likely reasons why these respondents were in class five and six can further be explained based on their limited understanding. Bawden (Writers, Critics and Children, 4) also justifies that children have different point of view from adults and may express very different ideas from those articulated by adults.

In conclusion to this section, satire may have contributed to the failure by some of the pupils to comprehend the intended message. This has been demonstrated in this section by their inability to grasp the significance of satire that has been exploited by the authors to depict shortcomings associated with some of the characters in the selected texts. These characters include Fina’s mother being satirised for her secrecy about their HIV/AIDS status, as well as the children in Mateso Town who are depicted harassing Sadaka, Kathesya’s boy because she (Kathesya) has HIV/AIDS. The authors of the selected texts show that the actions of these characters are contrary to how human beings should behave towards their fellow human beings who are infected with HIV/AIDS. Some of the pupils also commented that they did not see anything wrong in Kathesya and Nyaketo’s decisions to accept money for sex because their choices were based on the need to acquire basic needs. This is despite the fact that these characters are being satirised in the selected texts for their immoral behaviours.

Therefore, in conclusion, this section has shown that some devices exploited
in the selected texts failed to convey the intended message. These devices are gory
descriptions, illustrations, negative symbolism and failure to comprehend satire. The
pupils failed to grasp the meanings that these stylistics devices were intended to
convey. Some conveyed stereotypes about HIV/AIDS patients. They depicted that
death is imminent or expressed devaluation of HIV/AIDS victims. This negates the
overall message of the selected texts, which was to dispel myths about HIV/AIDS.
The devices also made the pupils interviewed to subscribe to negative values like
stigma, discrimination and rejection. They again do not condemn predatory characters
that sexually molest young girls. These devices are therefore inappropriately used, or
the pupils misinterpreted them because of their inadequate knowledge.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter constitutes the summary of the findings obtained from the study. Conclusion and recommendations are also drawn from the findings realized in the research.

5.1. SUMMARY

This research has established that most of the pupils interviewed criticised or approved of some values the characters in the selected texts espouse. The children disapproved of immoral characters in the selected texts. Immorality by these characters made them contract HIV/AIDS. These characters include Nyaketo and Kathesya, whose gullibility and greed for material satisfaction made them succumb to premarital sex, hence contracting HIV/AIDS. Further, this research work has ascertained that the children interviewed also condemned the women’s partners such as Kagume and Kathesya’s lover for maliciously infecting them (the young women) with HIV/AIDS. The study shows that the pupils condemned sexual predators preying on young children and immature girls. This exploitation of children and the youth by older members of society predisposes them to the risk of infection with HIV/AIDS. This research has also established that most of the children interviewed acknowledged other modes of HIV/AIDS transmission and sympathized with characters infected through mother to child transmission. They also recognized that HIV/AIDS infection is due to use of non-sterilised sharp objects, infected blood transfusion and involvement in drug abuse where non-sterilised needles are shared. This research report also shows that the pupils interviewed identified consequences of HIV/AIDS
infection on the affected and infected. These consequences are stigma and discrimination, economic burdens occasioned by the disease and psychological disorders like fear and helplessness when faced with HIV/AIDS infection. It was also determined in the study that the pupils additionally expressed feelings of hope in the fight against the scourge by affirming supremacy of love, care and concern from family, friends and society to mitigate the adverse consequences of HIV/AIDS infection. The pupils also affirmed the crucial role that appropriate education on HIV/AIDS plays in overcoming the spread of the disease.

Again, the study determines that HIV/AIDS is a gory subject and that most people are averse to discussing it openly. Even children too are less likely to be frank about the HIV/AIDS scourge. To surmount this challenge, the writers of the selected texts use plot in an ingenious manner to pass messages related to HIV/AIDS in a mode that does not scare the children. The rendering of the stories is layered with optimism. Ultimately, plot in the selected texts enable their (texts) hopeful conclusions. Additionally, plot is exploited for cathartic effect in the selected texts. Catharsis offers children a chance to purge themselves of bad emotions associated with HIV/AIDS. These feelings could be those that they encountered in the selected texts or learned previously from society. Children identify with the sufferings of the characters whose lives are disrupted by the HIV/AIDS scourge. As the characters overcome their tribulations, the children also triumph with them and formulate new perceptions about HIV/AIDS. Another stylistic strategy adopted is the use of appeasing themes: These pacifying themes are juxtaposed with distressing themes. The authors purposely develop positive adult characters who contrast with those that the children perceive as negative. These positive characters develop pacifying themes.
like love, care, concern and a sense of assurance in the face of the ravages of HIV/AIDS on the affected and infected. Setting further develops child characters who engage in adventure to solve problems occasioned by HIV/AIDS in their immediate environments. Most child readers identified with them and vicariously dispelled their fears about HIV/AIDS. This is achieved because the child characters teach positive lessons on how to deal with the challenges caused by HIV/AIDS and the children lauded the good values they learned.

Despite the successes of the selected texts in teaching wholesome values because of the deliberate stylistic choices exploited by their authors, there were some shortcomings in their use of some stylistic strategies. These devices that failed to communicate appropriate themes are gory illustrations and descriptions, negative symbolism and use of satire. These devices engendered negative feelings about HIV/AIDS. Gruesome illustrations and descriptions conveyed stereotypes about HIV/AIDS patients. They portrayed that death is imminent for HIV/AIDS patients or expressed devaluation of their lives because of their status. These stances negated the overall aims of the selected texts, which were to dispel myths about HIV/AIDS. The devices also made the pupils interviewed to subscribe to negative values such as stigma, discrimination and rejection against those infected with HIV/AIDS. Additionally, some of the pupils failed to comprehend the meanings that these devices communicated. They therefore did not understand that the authors of the selected texts used symbolism and satire to condemn immoral characters, those who sexually exploit minors, discriminate against people who are HIV positive and characters who did not communicate meaningful information about HIV/AIDS. Instead, some of the pupils identified with the characters who espouse these vices. These devices are
therefore inappropriately used, or the pupils misinterpreted them because of their inadequate knowledge about the nature of these stylistic devices.

5.2. CONCLUSIONS

The findings in this research work confirm that most of the children interviewed responded favourably to the depiction of the theme of HIV/AIDS in the stories selected for this study. The children affirmed that the selected texts teach them appropriate values to help them fight HIV/AIDS. Therefore, the writers of the selected texts offer wholesome values to children that may aid them to mitigate the adverse effects of HIV/AIDS.

In addition, this study confirms that there are specific devices that the authors of the selected texts made use of to depict the sensitive theme of HIV/AIDS. These special devices are use of plot for cathartic effect and exploitation of pacifying themes. These devices are hedo-palliative and help the authors to pass messages related to HIV/AIDS without distressing the children. Children realize a cathartic experience and learn new perceptions on HIV/AIDS by reading the selected texts. This relieves them of pent up and upsetting feelings that they may have held about HIV/AIDS. Relief is therefore achieved through use of plot and pacifying themes that soothe the emotions of the children.

The findings in this investigation also illustrate some devices that made children not to comprehend the intended themes in the selected texts. These are gory illustrations and descriptions, negative symbolism and complex satire.

In conclusion, the findings depict that in most instances, children’s fiction deal
with the theme of HIV/AIDS in a sensitive and educative manner.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study proposes that the availability of reading materials may help in the fight against HIV/AIDS. There should be provisions of wide reading content on HIV/AIDS for post primary school children. This will ensure they get access to relevant information on HIV/AIDS and other topics on human reproductive health and emerging issues such as the rapid spread of drug use, which fuels spread of HIV/AIDS.

In addition, there should be appropriate strategies by concerned stakeholders to empower the youth so that economic extremes do not force them to engage in sexual immorality to get the basic necessities of life. Attempts should also be made to make films based on the selected texts. This will ensure they reach a wider audience.

Workshops for creative writers can also be held to improve on their writing skills to avoid negative stereotyping. Furthermore, illustrators should be trained to ensure they utilise wholesome and appropriate illustrations.

5.3.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The researcher recommends further studies to be carried out on the use of other genres like oral literature in fighting against HIV/AIDS. Investigation should also be conducted to determine if exposure to reading material on HIV/AIDS changes behaviour of the children concerning morality and engagement in risky sexual
behaviour. Additionally, research should be done on the other texts in the series to determine their appropriateness for use in schools to fight against HIV/AIDS.
Mrs. Nambi looked at Kesani carefully and was glad to see the girl absorbing every word she was saying:

"The best way to protect yourself from getting HIV is to abstain from having sex until you are old enough to get married. Then find a marriage partner whose HIV status you know and who knows your HIV status."

"And the only way to know your HIV status is to undergo an HIV test, right?" Kesani asked.

"Yes, that's right. While it's true that there is no
sulky about using condoms," Nyaketo said as she broke into another spasm of coughing.

"I only got worried when I heard rumours that Kagume had lost his wife to AIDS. It was also said that he had a string of girlfriends at different universities and schools. So I confronted Kagume but he assured me that such rumours were meant to break our relationship so that some other girl could enjoy what I was enjoying."

Nyaketo took a long pause, then went on, "I continued with the relationship. Kagume died a year ago. On his deathbed, he confessed to me that his wife had died of AIDS and that he too was dying of AIDS complications."
She watched Nyaketo take a few sips.

“Thank you. I feel much better. Has... has Aunt Tendo left?” Kesani bowed her head, afraid to meet her sister’s eyes.

“Yes she has gone.”

Nyaketo’s eyes studied her with sadness, “Please ask Maama to come. I cannot bear this any longer and I want to tell her everything.”
Kesani Has a Problem

The shouts and laughter of school children filled the air announcing the arrival of the December holidays. Kesani fingered her report form sorrowfully, head bowed, eyes brimming with tears as Mrs. Nambi’s words sank into Kesani’s heart.
ILLUSTRATION 6: SENSITIVE POSTER ON HIV/AIDS

I HAVE AIDS
Please hug me

I can't make you sick

AIDS HOT LINE FOR KIDS
CENTER FOR ATTITUDINAL HEALING
19 MAIN ST., TIBURON, CA 94920, (415) 435-5022
ILLUSTRATION 7: STEREOTYPICAL POSTER ON HIV/AIDS
REFERENCES

PRIMARY SOURCES


SECONDARY SOURCES


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QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME ___________________ SCHOOL ___________________

AGE ___________________ CLASS ___________________

LOVE LASTS FOREVER

a) Mention all the characters in Love Lasts Forever.

b) Which characters do you like?

c) Give reasons why you like the characters above.

d) Are there characters you do not like? Mention them and give reasons why you do not like them.

e) Have you ever heard about HIV/AIDS? How do you feel when HIV/AIDS is mentioned?

f) Where is the story taking place? Why do you think it takes place there?

g) What lessons about causes of HIV/AIDS do you learn from the story?

h) What are the impacts/effects of HIV/AIDS as shown in the story?

i) What do you learn from Kathesya about how HIV/AIDS is contracted?

j) How do you feel about Kathesya who has HIV/AIDS?

k) What do you learn from Ndalama and his mother about how to treat those suffering from HIV/AIDS?

l) What is the work of the committee formed by the people in Ndalama’s village?

m) Do you like Kathesya’s father? Why?
n) What should people with HIV/AIDS do as shown by Kathesya?

o) Do you like pictures in the story?

p) Mention the pictures that you like/dislike and give reasons why.

q) Do you like the ending of the story? Why?

r) What do you think of HIV/AIDS after reading the book?

**KESANI GIVES ADVICE.**

a) Mention the characters in the book Kesani Gives Advice.

b) Which characters do you like?

c) Give reasons why you like the characters above.

d) Are there characters you do not like? Mention them and give reasons why you do not like them.

e) Have you ever heard of HIV/AIDS? How do you feel when HIV/AIDS is mentioned?

f) Name three ways in which HIV/AIDS can be transmitted as shown in the story.

g) What are the impact/effects of HIV/AIDS as shown in the story?

h) What do you learn from Nyaketo about accepting gifts in exchange for sex?

i) What do you learn from Kesani about how to treat those suffering from HIV/AIDS?

j) Name three ways in which one can live positively with HIV/AIDS.
k) Do you like Mrs. Nambi? Why?

l) How do you feel about Nyaketo’s mother because her daughter has HIV/AIDS?

m) Do you like pictures in the story?

n) Mention the pictures that you like/dislike and give reasons why.

o) What else do you like about the book you read?

p) Do you like the ending of the story? Why?

q) How do you feel about HIV/AIDS after reading the story?

FINA THE DANCER.

a) Mention the characters in the book Fina the Dancer

a) Which characters do you like?

b) Give reasons why you like the characters above.

c) Are there characters you do not like? Mention them.

d) Give reasons why you do not like the characters mentioned above.

e) Where is the story taking place? Why do you think it takes place there?

f) When did Fina’s father die?

g) What secret did Fina’s mother keep from her? Was it good to do so?

h) Name three ways in which HIV/AIDS can be transmitted as pointed out by Miss Kisa.

i) What are the impact/effects of having HIV/AIDS as shown in the book through Fina?
j) Do you think Mr. Sunday was a good man? Why?

k) What do you learn from Kemba about how to treat those suffering from HIV/AIDS?

l) Benson had said he admired Fina. Why does he change in the last note?

m) What did the counsellor tell Fina?

n) Do you like Nyamata and Mondo? Why?

o) How do you feel about Fina because she has HIV/AIDS?

p) Do you like pictures in the story?

q) Mention the pictures that you like/dislike and give reasons why,

r) What else do you like about the book you read?

s) Do you like the ending of the story? Why?

t) How do you now feel about HIV/AIDS after reading the story?