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## USE OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS WRITTEN IN THE CONTEXT OF ECOCRITICISM IN TURKISH LESSONS

Hatice GÜÇLÜ\*

Nuran BAŞOĞLU\*\*

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### Abstract

In the 21st century, where we have to protect our tomorrows by fighting environmental problems, we should raise awareness among our children about environmental awareness and ensure that this awareness becomes permanent by running the education process. Environmental awareness, which is among human-specific sensitivities, should be gained in childhood and maintained throughout life. Environmental awareness can be gained through the use of qualified children's books in Turkish lessons. This study, on the use of children's books written in the context of ecocriticism in Turkish lessons, was carried out in the form of action research in a four-week period with the beginning of 6th grade students. The findings obtained as a result of the activity practices in the form of writing letters and creating dialogue with interview questions regarding the works titled *The Mystery of Almarpa* written by Koray Avcı Çakman and *Common Spirit* written by Miyase Sertbarut were evaluated with descriptive analysis. It was determined that the books included in the study contributed positively to the environmental awareness of the students and the activity practices reinforced this approach. Although it was seen that most of the students had been sensitive to environmental problems before reading the books, it was observed that after reading the books, the solution suggestions of the students for the problems thrived and the number of students with this sensitivity increased.

**Keywords:** Ecocriticism, children's books, Turkish lesson, The Mysteryof Almarpa, Common Spirit.

### ÇEVRECİ ELEŞTİRİ BAĞLAMINDA YAZILMIŞ ÇOCUK KİTAPLARININ TÜRKÇE DERSLERİNDE KULLANIMI

#### Öz

Çevre sorunlarıyla mücadele ederek yarınlarımızı korumak zorunda olduğumuz 21. yüzyılda, çocuklarımızı çevre bilinci konusunda bilinçlendirmeli ve eğitim sürecini de işe koşarak bu bilincin kalıcı hâle gelmesini sağlamalıyız. İnsana özgü duyarlılıklar arasında yer alan çevre bilinci, çocuk yaşlarda kazandırılmalı ve yaşam boyu sürdürülmelidir. Türkçe

\* Türkçe Öğretmeni; Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, İstanbul, hatice.guclu@hotmail.com

\*\* Doç. Dr.; Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit Üniversitesi, Ereğli Eğitim Fakültesi, Türkçe Eğitimi ABD, nuranbasoglu@hotmail.com

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derslerinde nitelikli çocuk kitaplarının kullanımı ile çevre bilinci kazandırılabilir. Çevreci eleştiri bağlamında yazılmış çocuk kitaplarının Türkçe derslerinde kullanımı üzerine yapılan bu çalışma, 6. sınıf öğrencilerinin katılımıyla dört haftalık süreçte eylem araştırması şeklinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Koray Avcı Çakman tarafından yazılan *Almarpa'nın Gizemi* ve Miyase Sertbarut tarafından yazılan *Ortak Ruh* adlı eserlere ilişkin görüşme soruları ile mektup yazdırma ve diyalog oluşturma şeklinde gerçekleştirilen etkinlik uygulamaları sonucunda elde edilen bulgular betimsel analiz ile değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmada yer verilen kitapların öğrencilerin çevre bilincine olumlu katkılar sunduğu ve etkinlik uygulamalarının bu yaklaşımı pekiştirdiği belirlenmiştir. Öğrencilerin çoğunun kitapları okumadan önce de çevre sorunlarına karşı duyarlı oldukları görülmekle beraber kitapların okunmasının ardından öğrencilerin sorunlara dönük çözüm önerilerinin zenginleştiği ve bu duyarlılığa sahip öğrenci sayısının arttığı görülmüştür.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Çevreci eleştiri, çocuk kitapları, Türkçe dersi, Almarpa'nın Gizemi, Ortak Ruh.

### Introduction

The world we live in is affected by the changing and developing conditions day by day and is faced with the negative consequences of globalization. Undoubtedly, one of the most important measures that can be taken against globalization will be to heighten awareness of future generations in order for them to raise awareness about the events (Temel, 2010, p. 13) expresses ecocriticism as “a theory that investigates the place of nature in literature and aims to adopt a scientific understanding of nature in order to prevent the global environmental crisis” (Avuklu, 2013, p. 203), on the other hand, emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of the theory and states, “it aims to develop a scientific understanding of nature, which is also far from anthropocentrism, in order to prevent further damage to nature and to protect it.”

“Ecocriticism, which brings up the issue of how literary works can contribute to environment and nature by adapting ecological concepts to literary studies, focuses on the literary, cultural and social values, symbols and perspectives related to nature” (Oppermann, 1999, p. 29). Mishra (2016) who states that the literary works on environment deal well with the human-nature relationship and the connections between them, which is the basic element of environmental literature, emphasizes that the common message in this theory is to keep nature in its pristine beauty and not to destroy what we cannot create, and also states that with such works becoming the focus, people will learn to behave better with nature by adapting to the current environmental crisis.

While Onur (2016, p. 114) states that “prejudices against the natural world can develop in the early stages of life”, he also allows us to think about the positive effects of ecocriticism on children. Oğuzkan (2013) also emphasizes that the awareness of protecting nature will develop much more easily among children who grasp or sense the natural beauty and riches and watch the life of living things with constant observation. Environmental awareness, which is among human-specific sensitivities, should be gained in childhood and maintained throughout life. Environmental awareness can be gained through the use of qualified children's books in Turkish lessons.

When the literature is scanned, there are studies that examine ecocriticism on literary texts written for children. Ateş (2012) concluded that the story books in Gülsüm Cengiz's

*Tomurcuk Books* series that appeal to the 7-12 age range can create a love of nature and environmental awareness in children. Apriati (2013) stated that the children's book *Julie*, written by Jean Craighead George, is useful in building awareness of the natural environment and that those who read this book will understand how important the environment is for life and will take action to save and protect it. Batty (2016), in his study examining the use of fantastic elements in order to develop ecological awareness in children's literature, discussed three novels and as a result, fantastic books; he found that, as he did for adults, children also develop ecocriticism and can seriously encourage them to become environmentalists. Yılmaz (2017) determined that Koray Avcı Çakman's children's books are suitable works that can be examined in the context of ecocriticism. Güçlü Sarıdede (2021) examined eight children's books written by different children's literature authors by determining ecocriticism criteria and determined that the books are works that include the love of nature and aim to raise nature awareness to children. The studies carried out are qualitative studies at the theoretical level, on the other hand, in this study, the use of books suitable for practice and ecocriticism in Turkish teaching is included. In this context, the study has a unique quality in the literature.

In this study, on the use of children's books written in the context of ecocriticism in Turkish lessons, it was attempted to determine the place and importance of the qualified children's books selected by the researchers and taught to the students and of the activities applied in the lessons in raising environmental awareness among children.

## **Method**

### **Model of the Research**

This research, which was prepared by adopting a qualitative approach, was carried out with the action research method. "Action research is a research approach that a practitioner in practice directly or together with a researcher carries out, and which involves systematic data collection and analysis in order to reveal the problems related to the implementation process or to understand and solve a problem that has already arisen" (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016, p. 307). One of the researchers was also the practitioner of the action research, and the data were collected in accordance with the model.

In this action research, the use of qualified children's books in Turkish lessons and the acquisition of environmental awareness have been considered as a problem. For the solution of this problem, four-week lesson plans were prepared and implemented. Two of the children's books determined in the thesis study by Güçlü Sarıdede (2021) to be suitable for ecocriticism were used as materials to be used in the action plan.

### **Study Group**

In the study, the study group was determined by criterion sampling. "The basic understanding in criterion sampling is to study all cases that meet a predetermined set of criteria" (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016, p. 122). The study group of the research consisted of 15 students studying in the 6th grade of Orhan Veli Secondary School in the Ataşehir district of Istanbul for the researchers to monitor the research process continuously and the appropriateness of participation. Ethics committee approval of the study was obtained from Zonguldak Bulent Ecevit University Ethics Committee before starting the study (Decision No: 26/10/2020/876).

### Data Collection Tools and Data Collection

In this research, as a result of the literature review, two books that were determined to have been written in accordance with ecocriticism; *The Mystery of Almarpa* and *Common Spirit* were chosen. The research was carried out between 02.11.2020 and 27.11.2020 in line with the decision numbered 876 taken by applying to the Human Research Ethics Committee of Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University on 26.10.2020. In the study, a 2-week study period was allocated for each book within a 4-week implementation period.

In the book called *The Mystery of Almarpa*; the life of 10-year-old Kaan, which changed when his family moved to Koycegiz from Istanbul after his family entered the organic farming business, is handled. The sailor named Birdman, who lives in the town, often sails with his boat, which he calls Almarpa. Birdman teaches children about Kaunos, İz Tuzu Beach, caretta caretta and sweetgum trees. At the same time, he takes the children on excursions with his boat. The struggle of Birdman and the children is featured against foreigners who come to the town and try to smuggle the precious oils of sweetgum trees and make perfume.

In the book called *Common Spirit*; İlay and Fuat are the children protagonist of the book and they are trying to put an end to the cruelty people do to animals. According to the fiction of this fantastic story; some of the animals that are exploited, destroyed, exiled by humans send a piece of their souls to the sky with their last breath before they die. After a while, these spirit molecules join forces under the “Common Spirit” to take revenge on those who disturb the order and punish those who torture animals by paralyzing them. There is a narrative aimed at appealing to the conscience and sense of justice in everyone by revealing the selfishness of humans in sharing nature with other living things.

Interview questions to be directed to students and activities planned to be applied in the courses were created which were outcome-oriented and suitable for ecocriticism about the two books selected by the researchers. The suitability of the interview questions and activities was evaluated by three different experts experienced in the fields of Turkish education and children's literature, and the questions and activities took their final form in line with the expert feedback. Stewart and Cash (1985, p. 7) define the interview as “a mutual and interactive communication process based on asking and answering questions for a predetermined and serious purpose” (Cited by Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016, p. 129). The pre-interview questions were prepared in the form of three questions for each book, there are six pre-interview questions in total. The post-interview questions were prepared in the form of two questions for each book, there are four post-interview questions in total. While the post-interview questions focused on ecocriticism, they were prepared in a way that would touch on the important points of the texts. In the context of the reliability and validity of the study, how effectively the students read the texts was determined by these questions. The pre-interview questions were asked again together with the post-interview questions in order to determine the change in students' answers to the questions. Care was taken to ensure that the activities were suitable for ecocriticism and language skills, and that they could be applied in the lessons. Lesson plans for the applications are presented in the appendix of the article.

The activities are designed in accordance with the fictions of the books. A letter writing activity was prepared for the first book, and a dialogue creation activity was prepared for the second book. While collecting data, students were first asked pre-interview questions. Then they

were asked to read the books. After reading the books, activities were implemented in the classroom environment. After these procedures were completed and a week passed, the students were asked the post-interview questions.

The interview questions prepared by taking the opinions of field experts are as follows:

#### Interview Questions of The Mystery of Almarpa

1. Do you spend most of your time playing games outside or playing technological (computer, tablet, mobile phone) games?"
2. Do you think that humans make life difficult for living things in nature? Explain your answer with an example.
3. What do you know about sweetgum trees and caretta caretta? Write.

#### Post Interview Questions of The Mystery of Almarpa

1. Where does the title of the book come from? Why do you think the author chose to use this name? Please explain.
2. How do you think people can be prevented from harming nature for the sake of their interests? What would you do if you were in the Birdman's shoes?

#### Interview Questions of Common Spirit

1. How do you feel when poisonous animals such as scorpions and snakes are killed?
2. If you had the power to do something so that all animals in the world could live happily, what would you do?
3. What do you think about domesticating animals? Write.

#### Post Interview Questions of Common Spirit

1. What are the common features of the living things that make up the Common Spirit? How does the Common Spirit emerge? What does the Common Spirit intend?
2. Is it right for the Common Spirit to seek revenge on people? Why is that?

#### **Analysis of Data**

The data obtained in the research were evaluated with descriptive analysis. "The purpose of this type of analysis is to present the findings to the reader in an organized and interpreted form" (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008, p. 224). The answers given to the interview questions and the writings obtained in the activity applications were analyzed by descriptive analysis.

#### **Findings**

In this section, the pre-interview and post-interview questions about the books used as practice material in the study were analyzed. Activity examples were also evaluated. Obtained findings are presented in tables.

## Findings Related to the Book *The Mystery of Almarpa*

### Findings Related to Interview Questions

Table 1: Distribution Of The Answers Given To The Question, “Do You Spend Most Of Your Time Playing Games Outside Or Playing Technological (Computer, Tablet, Mobile Phone) Games?” According To The Codes

Answers	Pre-interview f	Post-interview f
Users of technological tools	8	8
Those who spend time outside	5	5
Those who do not do both	2	2

When Table 1 is examined; it is seen that most of the children (8 students) spend their time using technological tools. The reason for this situation can be shown as the fact that students love technological games and tools, as well as that their families and themselves do not find the outside world safe. Although the frequency distribution of student answers did not differ in the pre-interview and post-interview questions, it was determined that there was a change in the students' perspectives. In the pre-interview, 4 of the students (S3, S7, S10 and S13) who stated that they spent most of their time with technological games, made reference to the hero and his life in the book called *The Mystery of Almarpa* in the post-interview, and expressed that if they had the opportunity, they would spend their time outside in a town where they were intertwined with nature, like Kaan. In the opinion of one of the students (S15), it was observed that there was an awareness of the use of technology. In the pre-interview, the student stated that he used technology for games, and in the post-interview, he stated that he used it for lesson-oriented and informational purposes. This situation, namely the correct use of technology, finds its place in the book being read and is modeled. In this context, it can be said that most of the students identify with the protagonist of the book and gain messages for environmental awareness. 5 students (S6, S8, S9, S12, S14) who stated that they spent their time outside both in the pre-interview and in the post-interview, stated that the Covid-19 epidemic forced them to stay at home, and they preferred to spend time outside if the conditions were appropriate. It was observed that 2 students (S1, S11), who stated that they did not do both options, preferred to stay at home and do activities alone or play games with their siblings. Examples of the answers given are as follows:

S7: “*I spend my time with technological games. (Pre-interview)*”

*I spend my time with technological games, but if I had the opportunity like Kaan, I would like to spend it with my friends at sea. (Post-interview)”*

S10: “*I play mostly technological games. (Pre-interview)*”

*I spend most of my time with the computer, because during this period, we connect to the computer by doing our lessons from the zoom. But if there was no pandemic, I would like to spend my time by the sea with my friends, just like the children in the book. (Post-interview)”*

S13: “*Even if I want to play outside, I play on the phone at home because there is no one outside. Actually, my mom tells me to go out, but I do not want to leave the phone and go out. Sometimes I go to bed late in the evening just to play on the phone and I do not even know about the outside world at that time. (Pre-interview)*”

*I mean, unfortunately, I live at home because of today's conditions, but of course, if the cities we live in were safer enough for our families to allow us to go out on the streets, I'm sure I would*

go out more. If we lived in a small town, for example, I would always like to spend time outside. (Post-interview)”

Table 2: Distribution Of The Answers Given To The Question, “Do You Think That Humans Make Life Difficult For Living Things In Nature? Explain Your Answer With An Example.” According To The Codes

Answers	Pre-interview f	Post-interview f
Those who think they make it difficult	14	15
Those who do not think they make it difficult	1	0

When Table 2 is examined; in the pre-interview, 14 students thought that humans made the lives of other living things difficult, while only 1 student thought that s/he did not make it difficult. However, it was determined that there was a change in the opinion of this student in the post-interview form applied after reading the book. The student developed awareness and expressed that he regretted that caretta caretta could not lay their eggs on the beach because of people. When the answers given to the pre-interview and post-interview questions were compared, it was concluded that there was an increase in the frequency of "those who thought they made it difficult" in the post-interview, and thus all the students agreed with this opinion. 7 of the students (S1, S3, S7, S8, S10, S11 and S13) explained the post-interview question by giving examples from the book. This data also shows that the students were influenced by the book and gained new messages for environmental awareness. When the answers given were examined, it was seen that while examples of behaviors such as forest fires, cruelty to cats and dogs, and throwing garbage into the sea were given in the pre-interview, endangered animals and damaging trees for the sake of making money were mentioned in the post-interview. A student (S4) gave an answer in the post-interview emphasizing the view that people were also affected by the damage done by people to nature. Another student (S6) stated in the post-interview that people should put themselves in the place of other living things. Examples of the answers given are as follows:

S3: “I think that people make life difficult for living creatures in nature, such as throwing garbage into the sea, putting the lives of fish at risk. (Pre-interview)

I think people make life difficult for living things. For example, killing endangered creatures without care, harming them. Disturbing animals such as caratta caretta and making them unhappy. (Post-interview)”

S4: “Today, cats and dogs are harmed. By throwing garbage into the seas, fish are harmed. This complicates the lives of animals. (Pre-interview)

People are poisoning the living things there by throwing garbage into the sea. But for example, we also eat those fish, so we get poisoned. (Pre-interview)”

S6: “Yes, for example, we see a cat on the road and some people behave well and give food, but some murderous people hit and beat them, so they do not know because they have not experienced the pain. (Pre-interview)

Since people cannot put themselves in the place of animals, they complicate their lives and harm them. In other words, I think they make life difficult for living things. (Post-interview)”

S11: “Yes I think because people kick animals and throw garbage on the ground. (Pre-interview)

*Yes, I think, for example, in the book, when he comes to the beach to lay his eggs, when he sees the lights, I think it is a very bad thing that he returns and suffers. (Post-interview)''*

Table 3: Distribution Of The Answers Given To The Question, “What Do You Know About Sweetgum Trees And Caretta Carettas? Write.” According To The Codes

Answers	Pre-interview f	Post-interview f
Those who say they don't know what a sweetgum tree is	14	-
Those who say they know what a sweetgum tree is	1	15
Answers	Pre-interview f	Post-interview f
Those who say they don't know what caretta caretta is	9	-
Those who say they know what caretta caretta is	8	15

When Table 3 is examined; in the pre-interview, it is seen that there was 1 student who said s/he knew what sweetgum tree was, 14 students who said they didnot know what sweetgum tree was, 8 students who said they knew what caretta caretta was, and 9 students who said they didnot know what caretta caretta was. When the answers given by the students to the post-interview question are examined, it is found that 15 students could define sweetgum tree and caretta carettas. This finding shows that the students learned what sweetgum trees and caretta carettas were after reading the book. In the examination, there were 8 students (S1, S2, S3, S4, S7, S8, S9, S13) who said in the post-interview that perfume and medicine could be made from sweetgum trees. In addition, one student (S9) emphasized that sweetgum trees were a protected tree species, while 2 students (S12, S15) pointed out that it was a rare species.5 students (S1, S2, S6, S4, S8, S13, S15) emphasized in their answers that caretta carettas were endangered. In the post-interview, 5 students (S2, S7, S9, S13, S14) emphasized that caretta carettas were afraid of people and could not go ashore, and also mentioned that the light pollution created by people disturbed the turtles. Except for only one of these 5 students (S13), it was found that 4 students did not have any idea in the pre-interview about people making caretta carettas' lives difficult. This finding also shows that after reading the book, students' knowledge was enriched, while at the same time, their awareness level about the damage that people were doing to nature increased.

S2: *“I do not know anything about sweetgum trees. Caretta carettas, on the other hand, are very interesting turtles about their navigational instincts, which come to the beach to bury their eggs in the sand, although I have not researched them very closely. (Pre-interview)''*

*The oils that emerge from the plants on the sweetgum trees have an important place for perfumes. Female turtles of caretta carettas come to the beach to lay their eggs and to lay about a hundred eggs. Artificial lights block their way and disturb them. They do not like to lay their eggs in crowds. (Post-interview)''*

S7: *“I do not know. (Pre-interview)''*

*They can make perfume from the roots of sweetgum trees, and caretta carettas do not lay eggs in the morning. They are afraid of people and if they see light, they go to the light and die of breathlessness. (Post-interview)''*

S9: *“I do not know what a sweetgum tree is. Caretta carettas are a species of water turtle. (Pre-interview)''*

*Sweetgum Trees: Sweetgum trees have a lot of benefits, for example, they heal wounds and beautify the skin. It has also been declared a sensitive area to be strictly protected. Carretta carrettas live in the sea and never come to land except to lay eggs. As far as I know they move towards the light and these turtles are heading towards the shore because of unnecessary lights that people turn on. After that, they hit cars, bikes, etc. and they lose their lives... (Post-interview)”*

S13: *“I have no idea about sweetgum trees, but it could be an endangered tree species. Caretta caretta are a type of sea turtle and endangered animals. They bury their eggs in the sand, but because of the lights coming from the city, they lose their way and head towards the city. (Pre-interview)*

*They are both endangered creatures, and of course, this is because of humans, they go and make perfume with sweetgum trees, which are very rare; and although knowing that caretta caretta live, they build houses near their nests, which causes them to lose their way. (Post-interview)”*

Table 4: Distribution Of The Answers Given To The Question, “Where Does The Title Of The Book Come From? Why Do You Think The Author Chose To Use This Name? Please Explain.” According To The Codes

Answers	Post-interview f
Those who say that the name of the book is formed by the combination of the names of three birds	13
Those who say that the name of the book is the name of Birdman's boat	2
Answers	Post-interview f
Those who say that the author chose this name to arouse curiosity	5
Those who do not comment on the reason why the author chose this name	10

The question, “Where does the title of the book come from?” was only a post-interview question and was not included in the pre-interview. The purpose of asking this question was to have an idea about the students’ ability to understand and to make inferences from what they read. When Table 4 is examined; it is seen that there were 13 students who stated that the name of the book was a combination of the first syllables of the names of three birds (Albatross, seagull and parrot). 2 students (S3, S11) stated that the name of the book was "The Mystery of Almarpa" because it was the name of Birdman's boat. It is true that the name of Birdman's boat, the protagonist of the book, is Almarpa and the mystery comes from here, but the name Almarpa is an abbreviation of the name of the birds. The fact that 13 of the 15 students explained the emergence of the name and 2 (S3, S7) students answered this question correctly without explaining it showed that the book was understood. For the second stage of the question, “Why do you think the author chose to use this name? Please explain.”, 5 students (S3, S6, S7, S9, S12) stated that the author's aim was to draw attention, to arouse interest and curiosity in the book, while the other 10 students chose not to answer this question. A student (S7) emphasized in their answer that the author's purpose in choosing this name might be to increase the interest in birds. Another student (S12) empathized with the author by stating that it was a name that would make those who had not read the book curious, and that they could have chosen this name if they were the author. This answer also showed that the student internalized the book and even identified with the author.

S5: “The name of the book emerged with the combination of the names of three birds by taking the syllables AL from the Albatross, MAR from the seagull (“seagull” means “martı” in Turkish; so the first syllable is “MAR”) and PA from the parrot. (Post-interview)”

S7: Three bird names are hidden in the title of the author's book:

Albatross:al

Seagull: mar (“seagull” means “martı” in Turkish; so the first syllable is “MAR”)

Parrot: pa

The author's use of this name may have been to increase interest in birds. Maybe he wanted to make them valuable. (Post-interview)”

S12: “ALMARPA = Albatross, Seagull (“seagull” means “martı” in Turkish; so the first syllable is “MAR”), Parrot

I think it is a very meaningful name, more precisely for those who read the book. It is a mysterious name that will make those who have not read it curious. I do not think it would come to my mind, but I would name it this way myself if I were the author. (Post-interview)”

S13: “As I recall, Birdman chose the name of his boat, inspired by the first syllables of the names of the birds. He must have chosen this name because of the adventures he had inside the ship, and it is also a boat with great memories, as Birdman goes to the islands across with his boat every day and tries to protect sweetgum trees. (Post-interview)”

Table 5: Distribution Of The Answers Given To The Question, “How Do You Think People Can Be Prevented From Harming Nature For The Sake Of Their Interests? What Would You Do If You Were In The Birdman’s Shoes?” According To The Codes

Answers	Post-interview f
Those who say that laws should be enacted and punishments should be given	7
Those who say that campaigns should be made via social media, etc. and awareness should be raised	4
Those who do not know about the ban and do not comment	3
Those who say it cannot be prevented	1
Answers	Post-interview f
Those who say I would act like Birdman	12
Those who say they would report it to the authorities or the police	2
Those who do not comment	1

When Table 5 is examined; it is seen that 7 students (S1, S4, S8, S9, S12, S14, S15) thought that damage to nature could be prevented by arguing that laws should be enacted and people should be punished. One of the students (S14) who thought that a law should be enacted stated that the article stating that every other living thing should have the right to live, like humans, should be added to the constitution. This answer of the student coincides with the main idea of ecocriticism, the view that human is not the owner of nature, but a part of it. 4 students (S3, S6, S7, S10) emphasized that it was necessary to raise awareness among people in various ways. One of these students (S9) stated that the power of social media was effective in raising awareness, while another student (S3) stated that campaigns should be made. Another student (S6) stated that nature gave us food and argued that people should be made aware. A student (S7), who argued that we should empathize with living things in nature, also stated that by

warning people, the damage to nature could be prevented.1 student (S2) stated that s/he did not think that it could be prevented.

To the second part of the question, “What would you do if you were in Birdman’s shoes?” 12 students stated that they would behave like Birdman and would not remain silent in the face of the harm done to nature. This data shows that students approved of Birdman’s behavior and identified with the protagonist by wanting to act like him. One of the students (S13) who approved of Birdman stated that although he approved of Birdman’s reaction to criminals, they did not find it right to attempt risky jobs alone without the knowledge of the children. 2 students (S11, S12) stated that they would call the authorities or the police. One student (S9) did not comment on this issue.

S2: *I do not think that people will ever be prevented from harming nature for the sake of their interests. But if I were Birdman, I would oppose every evil I witnessed. (Post-interview)”*

S6: *“I would try to make people aware. People pollute the nature that gives us food. So if I were Birdman I would do the same. (Post-interview)”*

S9: *“Since social media has been used a lot lately, I would first write and share an article about the damage to nature, then I would join the associations established about it, I would print the article I wrote on the streets and at the most used places, and finally I would get in a car and go to popular places, I would stop people and let them know about it.*

*In order for people not to harm nature, I would punish them and give 3 years imprisonment to those who violate this law, at the same time I would hire photographers and send each of them to a separate company and ask them to photograph how they work there. So we would know who did what. (Post-interview)”*

S13: *“In other words, Birdmantaught them their place in the most correct way, and if I were in Birdman’s shoes, I would not do anything different from what he did, but I think Birdman should have told the children about the events from the very beginning. It is also not very pleasant to be involved in risky business alone. (Post-interview)”*

S14: *“If it were me instead of Birdman, I would do the same. In order to prevent people from harming nature, we must change the article in our constitution that all people have the right to life, as all living things have the right to live. (Post-interview)”*

### **Findings Related to the Activity**

As an activity study, the students were asked to write a letter to Birdman, one of the heroes of the text, describing their feelings and thoughts. In choosing the activity of this book as a letter, besides the students’ desire to express their feelings and thoughts in writing, also lies the detail of the letter in the fiction of the book. Kaan, the main protagonist of the book in fiction, begins to tell his life in Koycegiz by writing a letter to his friend Eren, because Kaan has distanced himself from technology and discovered the beauties of natural life thanks to natural life. He prefers to write letters instead of e-mails, so he realizes that he can express his feelings better. He asks his friend Eren to write a letter to him, as well.

When the written letters were evaluated; it was observed that most of the students stated that they first suspected Birdman, like the heroes in the fiction, and when the book was finished, they understood that Birdman was a good, nature-loving and very knowledgeable person. The

fact that students wanted to meet him in real life (like going to Dalyan and visiting Birdman) in their letters and expected him to reply to their letters showed that they embraced Birdman, who is a book hero. When the expressions in the letters were examined in the context of ecocriticism, it was seen that an awareness was formed in the ideas of the children. After reading this book, they stated that they wanted to live in an environment intertwined with nature, like Birdman and Kaan, that they were informed about caretta caretta and sweetgum trees, that they wanted to do something for nature and questioned their relationship with technology. Some examples selected from the answers given by the students to the letter activity are as follows:

S2: *“Dear Birdman,*

*Your love of birds and nature is what makes you special. Your attitude towards birds and nature and what you know about them is nice. It must be a talent to be so knowledgeable. I hope you have a good time with the kids on your next cruise. Yours sincerely.”*

S4: *“Birdman, you have a very interesting personality and you have very adventurous memories, I would love to be with you. I would also love for my family to meet you. We need people like you everywhere because first of all, you love nature very much, you try to prevent those who harm nature, there is a spirit of heroism in you. You are the best book character I have ever seen. Yours sincerely.”*

S6: *“Hello Birdman, I think you are in the forest again, but I am at home again. You are never bored in the forest because a person is never bored in the forest and the sea. You eat fruit from the tree, you swim in the sea. I am very bored at home. Your house is a huge forest, mine is a tiny apartment, so I have to watch TV at home. By the way, I did not ask how you were doing. I hope you are fine. I hope your birds are fine, too. Take care, see you.”*

S7: *“Hello Birdman, when I heard about a book called The Mystery of Almarpa, I wondered what kind of book it was. After reading the book, my opinion changed. Although the name Almarpa still sounds different. I did not think you were a bad person from the beginning anyway. Someone who tells such educational stories cannot be a bad person. You taught us to protect the environment, nature and animals with your instructive stories. You reminded us of our wasted time on the internet. Kaan also wrote a letter for the first time thanks to you. I hope you will reply to my letter. With love.”*

### Findings Related to the Book Common Spirit

#### Findings Related to Interview Questions

Table 6: Distribution Of The Answers Given To The Question, “How Do You Feel When Poisonous Animals Such As Scorpions And Snakes Are Killed?” According To The Codes

Answers	Pre-interview f	Post-interview f
I would feel sorry	11	14
I would not feel anything	2	-
I would not feel sorry	1	1
I would both be sorry and not sorry	1	-

When Table 6 is examined; in the pre-interview and post-interview questions, it was seen that most of the students were upset about the killing of creatures such as scorpions and snakes. In the pre-interview, 11 of the students stated that they would be sorry, 2 students stated

they would not feel anything, 1 student stated s/he would not be sorry, and 1 student stated s/he would be indecisive and would be and not be sorry at the same time. Considering the answers given to the post-interview questions, it was seen that the number of students who stated that they would be sorry increased to 14. The student (S15), who stated that s/he would not be sorry in the pre-interview, used an indecisive expression and stated that s/he might be a little upset. One of the students (S13) who stated that s/he would not feel anything in the pre-interview added that s/he would be a little afraid. However, after reading the book, this student changed his mind and in her/his answer to the post-interview question, it was seen that s/he talked about the life cycle and mentioned the right of every living thing to live. When the pre-interview and post-interview frequencies were compared, it was found that there was an increase in the number of students who used the phrase “I would feel sorry” after reading the book. The student (S15), who stated that s/he would not be upset in the pre-interview, stated that s/he would not be upset if they harmed her/him in the last interview, but s/he would be upset if they did not harm her/him. When the answers were examined, it was seen that the opinions of 3 students (S3, S13, S15) changed after they read the book *Common Spirit*. In the pre-interview, some of the students who gave the answer “I would be sorry.” expressed that they would be sad even though they were afraid of these creatures.

S3: *“On the one hand, I would be sad, on the other hand, I would feel happy. (Pre-interview)”*

*All animals in the world have the right to life, and I would regret that they were killed as long as they did not harm us. (Post-interview)”*

S13: *“I would not feel anything and I would feel a little scared. (Pre-interview)”*

*In fact, when such creatures among humans are killed by almost everyone in the world because they are dangerous, no one speaks out, but I think this is a wrong behavior, after all, there is a life cycle in the world and animals have an important place in this cycle and we humans should not kill them. And as for the question, I would have a bad feeling and I would actually be sad... (Post-interview)”*

S15: *“Frankly, I do not get upset when poisonous animals are killed, but I am not saying I would not get upset at all. (Pre-interview)”*

*If it were going to harm me at that moment, I would not be very sad, but if it were not going to harm me, then I would be very sad because every creature in this world has the right to live. (Post-interview)”*

Table 7: Distribution Of The Answers Given To The Question, “If You Had The Power To Do Something So That All Animals In The World Could Live Happily, What Would You Do?” According To the codes

Answers	Pre-interview f	Post-interview f
I would protect them all and look out for them all	6	3
I would improve their life conditions	6	-
I would make laws and impose heavy penalties	1	8
I would build a new planet	1	-
I would not harm any living thing	1	-
I would run awareness campaigns	-	4

When Table 7 is examined; in the pre-interview, it is seen that 6 students wanted to use the given power to protect and look out for animals, 6 students wanted to improve the living conditions of animals, and 1 student wanted to use the power to enact laws and punish people. One student (S15) stated that s/he would not harm any living thing in the pre-interview. One student (S13) gave a different answer and stated that s/he wanted to move to a new planet by taking all the animals and some people s/he loved with her/him. When the answers given in the post-interview are examined, the increase in the number of students who wanted to enact laws and punish people is striking. In the pre-interview, only 1 student wanted to enact a law, but after reading the book, *Common Spirit*, 8 students' thoughts changed and they also stated that they thought that people who harmed animals should be punished. While there were no students who wanted to raise awareness in the pre-interview, it was remarkable that 4 students (S4, S6, S9, S10) stated that they would work to raise awareness in the post-interview.

S4: *"I would shelter them all. I would give them food and water. I would release them. I would help them heal. (Pre-interview)*

*I would build shelters and protect them. I would organize campaigns to raise awareness among people. (Post-interview)"*

S6: *"I do not think animals are comfortable in the world because some people do not give cats food or anything, they throw cigarettes, cats or dogs starve to death. (Pre-interview)*

*I would organize campaigns and pass laws teaching people that all living things have the right to live. (Post-interview)"*

S13: *"I would collect all the animals and take my family and my teacher Hatice and establish a new planet. I would provide good living conditions for all animals there. (Pre-interview)*

*First of all, I would remove the carriages in the world, I would like more advertisements to be made about these issues on social media, and just like in the book, Common Spirit, those who do evil should be punished immediately and not be released until they realize their crimes, but this punishment is not the punishment we know, but the same thing that is done in the book Common Spirit. (Post-interview)"*

S15: *"I would not harm any animal. (Pre-interview)*

*I would implement a system where people could not harm animals and would punish them severely if they did. (Post-interview)"*

Table 8: Distribution Of The Answers Given To The Question, "What Do You Think About Domesticating Animals? Write." According To The Codes

Answers	Pre-interview f	Post-interview f
They should not be domesticated	8	11
They should be domesticated	4	3
No Idea-I'm Undecided	3	1

When Table 8 is examined; although the frequency distribution of their answers did not differ in the pre-interview and post-interview questions, it was determined that there was a change in the students' perspectives. While the number of students who answered "They should not be domesticated." was 8 in the pre-interview, it was seen that this number increased to 11 in the post-interview. The students who answered "They should be domesticated." decreased from

4 in the pre-interview to 3 in the post-interview, and these students also added the statement that animals should live in their natural environment. 3 students (S7, S8, S10) who stated that they had no opinion in the pre-interview, changed their minds after reading the book, and 2 students (S7, S8) stated that they found it wrong, and 1 student (S10) stated that if the animals were taken care of, there would be no problem. One student (S15), who gave the answer "They should not be domesticated" in the pre-interview, stated that s/he was undecided in the post-interview. 2 students (S12, S13) stated that violence was applied to animals during domestication and therefore they were against domestication. One student (S6), in the pre-interview, thought that domestication was positive because domesticated animals did not become extinct, but after reading the book, s/he changed his mind and stated that it was wrong for people to leave animals on the street or in the forest.

S6: *"Well, I think it is good to domesticate animals, they do not go extinct. (Pre-interview)*

*Animals do not become extinct, but they are domesticated and then left in the forest and on the street, I find this wrong. (Post-interview)"*

S7: *"I do not know. No idea. (Pre-interview)*

*I do not find it right, every animal should live in its own natural environment. (Post-interview)"*

S10: *"I have no idea. (Pre-interview)*

*If we take good care of the animals we domesticate, I think it is okay. (Post-interview)"*

S15: *"I think it is not good to domesticate animals, we should love each animal according to its nature. (Pre-interview)*

*Actually, I'm undecided on this. On the one hand, people can feed all animals that can be domesticated, but on the other hand, they play with their feelings, so I am undecided about this. (Post-interview)"*

Table 9: Distribution Of The Answers To The Questions, "What Are The Common Features Of The Living Things That Make Up The Common Spirit? How Does The Common Spirit Emerge? What Does The Common Spirit Intend?" According To The Codes

Answers	Post-interview f
It consists of the spirits of animals killed by humans	15
Answers	Post-interview f
Its purpose is to punish those who mistreat animals	12
Its aim is to take revenge on people	3

When Table 9 is examined; it was determined that all of the students expressed the purpose of the Common Spirit based on the book and in accordance with the message that the book wanted to give. It was observed that 12 students stated that the purpose of the Common Spirit was to punish people who mistreated animals, and 3 students (S4, S6, S9) stated that it was to take revenge. One of the students (S14) referred to the book called *Common Spirit* and mentioned that the starting point of the event was the death of the horse named Storm, while another student (S15) attributed the beginning of the events to the emergence of the Blue Crow.

S2: *"The common spirit punishes people who are in the same environment as people who act for an evil purpose towards animals, regardless of what they do or not. Although nobody knows the purpose of the Common Spirit, which emerged with the union of the souls of dead animals, I*

observed that its purpose is to erase people who harm animals from the world or punish by paralyzing them, making them regret and ask for peace. (Post-interview)”

S4: “I think the common feature of the creatures that make up the Common Spirit is that they are all brutally killed by humans. Animals unite and try to take revenge on humans. (Post-interview)”

S12: “The Common Spirit is something that is created with the souls of dead animals, and its purpose is to punish those who harm animals. How it works: the spirits of animals form a cloud and go to the people who kill the animals and cause them to be paralyzed. (Post-interview)”

S14: “The spirits of animals abandoned by their owners or abused by people form the common spirit. The horse, Storm’s sending its spirit molecule into the air after dying initiates the common spirit. It aims to make people who are cruel to animals be bedridden by punishing them. (Post-interview)”

Table 10: Distribution Of The Answers Given To The Question, “Is It Right For The Common Spirit To Seek Revenge On People? Why Is That?” According To The Codes

Answers	Post-interview f
Yes, it is right.	14
No, it is not right.	1

When the answers given by the students to the questions were examined, it was seen that 14 students considered the *Common Spirit's* desire to take revenge on people as the right behavior, and one student (S14) did not find it right to take revenge. One student (S2) stated that s/he found it right, but criticized the punishment of innocent people in the same environment. Two students (S8, S15) stated that if those who harmed animals were punished, they could give up these evil deeds.

S2: “I think it is right that they want to take revenge, except that it paralyzes all the people in the same environment. I think it is a correct judgment because they act like their own freedom is restricted, it is a different way of showing off divine justice. No one can restrict anyone's freedom. (Post-interview)”

S8: “Yes, it is true because if they were not punished, they could hurt other animals too. Maybe they will regret it and not do it again when they are punished. (Post-interview)”

S14: “This is not good behavior even if I want to say yes very much. Taking revenge makes the creature worse than what was done to it. Not everything has to be mutual. If you do good to a person who does you harm, that person may realize her/his mistake and not make the same mistake. If you take revenge, s/he will not do the same just because s/he is afraid. And s/he will not think s/he has made a mistake. What is done to animals will not end then. (Post-interview)”

S15: “I think it's okay to take revenge. Besides, if he did not take revenge, people would still act like that, I think it is good that he took revenge, at least people will come to their senses and not act like that again. (Post-interview)”

### Findings Related to the Activity

As an activity study, the students were asked to research whether there are laws on the protection of animal rights in our country and, if there are, to write whether these laws are implemented and whether they are sufficient with dialogues in the language of animals. The aim of this activity is to provide students with research skills and to enable them to present the information they have researched in dialogues by empathizing with the book. Students were asked to make personifications because the plot of the book *Common Spirit* was created through the art of personification and speaking.

When the answers given to the activity are examined, it is seen that the students stated that they saw that there were laws to protect animal rights, but that these laws were not implemented. It is seen that students not only find these laws sufficient, but also criticize people's insensitivity on this issue. At the same time, it was seen that they were able to empathize and express the importance of animal rights through the eyes of animals. A student (S2) mentioned in her/his dialogue that these rights were for pets and emphasized that there was no law for animals living in the forest or on the street. Another student (S2) stated that laws existed but were not implemented. In the answers given to the activity, it is seen that one student (S12) expressed the dialogue between animals with a different perspective than the other students. The student emphasized that animals were equal with each other and stated that each animal had an aspect that was superior to the other.

Some examples selected from the answers given by the students to the dialogue activity are as follows:

S2: *“Rupe: Don't you ever watch TV? It takes two or three days to get out of jail. Again, they continue to use violence against animals. They are incorrigible!”*

Liv: *You are correct, actually. Laws need to be enforced, not written.”*

S12: *“Bird: Hello you little lamb. (Here he bursts into laughter.)*

Lamb: *I will not let you make fun of me anymore! My mom told me yesterday that all animals are equal and that just because you have wings doesnot mean you are superior to me.*

*(The bird feels disappointed a bit and then flies to its mother to ask her to tell her about animal rights)*

Bird: *I asked my mother to tell me just like your mother, and she taught me many of our rights. I apologize to you my friend for treating you like that.*

Lamb: *It is nothing, my friend.”*

S14: *“According to the Animal Protection Law No. 5199: Article 1- Purpose of this Law is to ensure the comfortable life of animals and to treat animals well and appropriately, to ensure that animals are best protected against pain, suffering and torture, and to prevent all kinds of victimization.*

*However, this law could not prevent animals from suffering. All kinds of cruelty to animals are still done and these people are not punished. For example, those who tie barking dogs, which do not harm anyone, to the back of cars and pull them on the street are not punished. Animals are*

*still persecuted. Now people who harm animals should be arrested, those who harm animals can also harm people.”*

### Discussion and Conclusion

When the literature is scanned; it is seen that researches are carried out on the examination of literary texts in order to bring environmental awareness to children. Ateş (2012) stated that Gülsüm Cengiz's children's stories can create a love of nature and environmental awareness in children; Yılmaz (2017), on the other hand, stated that Koray Avcı Çakman's works are suitable works that can be examined in the context of ecocriticism. Cengiz (2013) in his study stated that two writers from different geographies (Stefano Benni from Italy and Buket Uzuner from Turkey) want to convey messages in accordance with the ecocriticism perspective in their works, and both writers reveal that the harm done to nature is actually the harm done by man to himself. In his work; specifying that nature takes place as a living creature in Dede Korkut Oguznames and that human beings display a responsible, respectful and protective attitude towards nature, Erdoğan (2014) emphasized that literature has an important role in creating environmental awareness and that literature can contribute to the creation of a sustainable world with new studies to be carried out. This research is also in line with the results of all these studies and reveals that the use of qualified children's books written in the context of ecocriticism in Turkish lessons can be effective in raising environmental awareness in children suggesting that it will help them adopt the perspective that the environment will be accepted as a subject. Başoğlu and Sarıdede (2020) established in their study that the texts in the secondary school Turkish textbooks have the qualities suitable for ecocriticism, but the number of these qualified texts is not enough. In this context, it is obvious that Turkish lessons should be supported with books suitable for ecocriticism, as it is mentioned in this study.

After reading the book *The Mystery of Almarpa*, the students stated that they would like to spend their time outside, in a town where they are intertwined with nature, like Kaan, if they could. Although the students were aware of the fact that people made the life of living things difficult in nature, after reading the book, they emphasized the view that people were affected by the damage that people caused to nature. They emphasized the sense of empathy by stating that people should put themselves in the place of other living things. These statements show that students have gained perspectives suitable for ecocriticism. It is seen that after reading the book, the students learned what sweetgum trees and caretta caretta are, and they also learned about their importance in nature. They also emphasized that laws should be enacted to punish people who harm nature. The letter writing activity also showed that the students wanted to do something for nature and questioned their relationship with technology.

After reading the book *Common Spirit*, it was seen that the students gained awareness about the right to life of all animals. In order for all animals in the world to live happily, they answered according to their own skills (protecting, protecting, improving their living conditions, etc.) in the pre-interview, while in the post-interview their answers comprised the whole society (making laws, giving heavy punishments, preparing awareness campaigns, etc.) which reveals the change in their awareness. It is remarkable that the number of students who believed that animals should not be domesticated increased after reading the book and the statement that animals should live in their natural environment was added. When students were asked to write dialogues about animal laws as an activity; they emphasized in their writings that the laws on animal rights were not implemented. The fact that the students did not find the laws sufficient

and that they criticized those who were insensitive to animal rights reinforces what is explained in the book.

As a result of this study on the use of children's books written in the context of ecocriticism in Turkish lessons; when the pre-interviews and post-interviews with the students were compared, it was determined that the books included in the study contributed positively to the environmental awareness of the students and the activity practices reinforced this approach. Although it was observed that most of the students were sensitive to environmental problems before reading the books, it was observed that after reading the books, the solution suggestions of the students were enriched and the number of students with this sensitivity increased to include almost all students. This shows that the students read the books by perceiving them. It was determined that they were influenced by the books in the activity practices and they developed new perspectives towards environment.

In today's conditions, where protecting the environment and having environmental awareness gain more and more importance every day; the fact that the texts on the environment are few in the textbooks and that children need practices rather than theoretical knowledge for effective learning make us think that teachers should give more space to ecocriticism texts and activities in the lessons. This study was carried out with 6th grade students and in Turkish lessons. It can be suggested that future studies should be carried out with different age groups and in different courses. Comparing the results will give researchers an idea about the applicability of ecocriticism.

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<b>APPENDIX: ACTION RESEARCH LESSON PLAN</b>				
<b>THE MYSTERY OF ALMARPA LESSON PLAN</b>				
<b>Week</b>	<b>Process Steps</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Ecoriticism</b>
<b>1.Week</b>	Implementation of pre-interview questions (1 lesson hour-40 minutes)  Reading process (Reading the book, 2 lesson hours-80 minutes)	Semi-structured pre-interview forms were replicated and applied to the students.  Reading methods and techniques were applied and silent book reading was practiced during two lesson hours.  The book reading process continued at home throughout the week.	Fills the forms in accordance with the instructions.  Uses reading methods and techniques.  Reads the text in accordance with the characteristics of the genre.  Uses information resources effectively.	Pre-interview questions were prepared to measure whether the child sees himself as a part of nature before reading the books. Especially in the second question, it was tried to determine whether the child sees himself as the subject or the object of nature.
<b>2.Week</b>	Continuation of the reading process (2 lesson hours-80 min.)  Implementation of events (1 lesson hour-40 min.)  Implementation of final interview questions. (1 lesson hour-40 min.)	Reading methods and techniques were applied and silent book reading was practiced during two lesson hours.  A letter writing activity was applied to the students.  Semi-structured final interview forms were replicated and applied to the students.	Uses reading strategies.  Implements writing strategies.  Writes narrative texts.  Distinguish between text types. (Letter writing activity)  Answers questions about the text.  Content of the text comments.  Makes inferences about what they read.	With the letter writing activity, the child's ability to identify with the characters in the book was aimed to be activated. There is ample room for correspondence in the fiction of the book. The student who can identify with the hero of the book can also gain the ability to look at nature as the protagonist of the book.  Since ecocriticism is a solution-oriented form of criticism, questions that can enable the child to find solutions to environmental problems were also included in the last interview questions.
<b>COMMON SPIRIT BOOK LESSON PLAN</b>				
<b>Week</b>	<b>Process Steps</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Ecoriticism</b>
<b>3.Week</b>	Implementation of pre-interview questions (1 lesson hour-40 minutes)  Reading process (Reading the book, 2 lesson hours-80 minutes)	Semi-structured pre-interview forms were replicated and applied to the students.  Reading methods and techniques were applied and silent book reading was practiced during two	Fills the forms in accordance with the instructions.  Uses reading methods and techniques.  Reads the text in accordance with	Pre-interview questions were prepared to measure whether the child sees himself as a part of nature before reading the books.  In all of the pre-interview questions, it was tried to determine whether the child saw himself as the subject or object of nature.

		<p>lesson hours.</p> <p>The book reading process continued at home throughout the week.</p> <p>Before the activity, students were given a research assignment.</p>	<p>the characteristics of the genre.</p> <p>Uses information resources effectively.</p>	
<b>4.Week</b>	<p>Continuation of the reading process (2 lesson hours-80 min.)</p> <p>Implementation of events (1 lesson hour-40 min.)</p> <p>Implementation of final interview questions. (1 lesson hour-40 min.)</p>	<p>Reading methods and techniques were applied and silent book reading was practiced during two lesson hours.</p> <p>In the 3rd week, activities were applied to the students by making use of the context of the research assignment given to the students.</p> <p>Semi-structured final interview forms were replicated and applied to the students.</p>	<p>Uses reading strategies.</p> <p>Implements writing strategies.</p> <p>Writes narrative texts.</p> <p>Answers questions about the text.</p> <p>Content of the text comments.</p> <p>Makes inferences about what they read.</p>	<p>Before the activity of producing solutions through dialogue, which is the activity of the book, children were given time for research. The reason why the given research result is asked to be written from the point of view of animals is to try to make the students identify with the heroes of the book.</p>