

INTERTEXTUALITY AND RESILIENCE: NAVIGATING CATASTROPHE THROUGH TEXTUAL NETWORKS IN CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S DISASTER LITERATURE

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Contemporary children's literature has significantly transformed in addressing disaster, trauma, and recovery themes through sophisticated intertextual strategies. This study examines how authors employ cross-textual references, allusions, and narrative echoes to help young readers process catastrophic events while building resilience. Through systematic analysis of contemporary children's disaster literature published between 2000 and 2024, this research investigates intertextual mechanisms across four disaster categories: natural disasters, climate change, human-made disasters, and personal catastrophes. The theoretical framework draws upon Y. Kristeva's foundational intertextuality theory and G. Genette's transtextual taxonomy, which are explicitly applied to trauma-informed children's literature. Case studies include analysing works by P. Philbrick, P. Brown, T. Lai, and the 2025 S. King – M. Sendak collaboration on "Hansel and Gretel". Findings reveal that intertextual strategies operate through archetypal frameworks, mythological traditions, and cultural migration narratives, providing cognitive scaffolding and emotional containment for young readers. Natural disaster narratives consistently employ biblical flood imagery and survival literature traditions, while climate change literature innovatively addresses technology-nature relationships through familiar narrative patterns. Human-made disaster literature demonstrates complex cultural bridging mechanisms, particularly in refugee and war narratives negotiating hybrid identity formation. The S. King – M. Sendak collaboration exemplifies "temporal intertextuality", where multiple historical moments converge to create therapeutic narrative frameworks. Results indicate that intertextuality serves five primary functions: cognitive scaffolding, emotional containment, cultural transmission, identity formation, and community connection building. These mechanisms demonstrate significant bibliotherapeutic potential, suggesting that intertextually sophisticated disaster narratives are crucial resources for trauma processing and resilience development. However, empirical research examining child reader interpretation remains limited, and emerging disaster types require ongoing analysis. This study contributes to understanding how children's literature mediates trauma through textual networks and establishes intertextuality as a fundamental mechanism for cultural transmission of survival wisdom and adaptive capacity in an increasingly uncertain world.

ІНТЕРТЕКСТУАЛЬНІСТЬ ТА СТІЙКІСТЬ: НАВІГАЦІЯ ЧЕРЕЗ ТЕКСТУАЛЬНІ МЕРЕЖІ У СУЧАСНІЙ ДИТЯЧІЙ ЛІТЕРАТУРІ КАТАСТРОФ

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Ключові слова:

інтертекстуальність, дитяча література, наративи катастроф, стійкість, казки, культурна передача, бібліотерапія.

Сучасна дитяча література значно трансформувалася у висвітленні тем катастроф, травм та відновлення за допомогою складних інтертекстуальних стратегій. Це дослідження розглядає, як автори використовують міжтекстуальні посилання, алюзії та наративні відлуння, щоб допомогти юним читачам опрацювати катастрофічні події, одночасно розвиваючи стійкість. Завдяки систематичному аналізу сучасної дитячої літератури про катастрофи, опублікованої між 2000 і 2024 роками, це дослідження досліджує інтертекстуальні механізми у чотирьох категоріях катастроф: стихійні лиха, зміна клімату, техногенні катастрофи та особисті катастрофи. Теоретична база спирається на фундаментальну теорію інтертекстуальності Ю. Крістєвої та транстекстуальну таксономію Ж. Женетта, які безпосередньо застосовуються до дитячої літератури, що базується на травматичних елементах. Тематичні дослідження включають аналіз творів П. Філбріка, П. Брауна, Т. Лая та спільної роботи С. Кінга – М. Сендака над твором «Гензель і Гретель» 2025 року. Результати дослідження показують, що інтертекстуальні стратегії діють через архетипні рамки, міфологічні традиції та наративи культурної міграції, забезпечуючи когнітивне скелювання та емоційне стримування для юних читачів. У наративах про стихійні лиха послідовно використовуються біблійні образи потопу та традиції літератури про виживання, тоді як література про зміну клімату інноваційно розглядає взаємозв'язки між технологією та природою через знайомі наративні моделі. Література про антропогенні катастрофи демонструє складні механізми культурного з'єднання, особливо в наративах про біженців та війну, де ведуться переговори щодо формування гібридної ідентичності. Співпраця С. Кінга – М. Сендака є прикладом «часової інтертекстуальності», де численні історичні моменти сходяться, створюючи терапевтичні наративні рамки. Результати показують, що інтертекстуальність виконує п'ять основних функцій, таких як: когнітивне скелювання, емоційне стримування, культурна передача, формування ідентичності та побудова зв'язків у спільноті. Ці механізми демонструють значний бібліотерапевтичний потенціал, який свідчить, що інтертекстуально складні наративи катастроф є ключовими ресурсами для обробки травми та розвитку стійкості. Однак емпіричні дослідження, що вивчають інтерпретацію дитячим читачем, залишаються обмеженими, а нові типи катастроф потребують постійного аналізу. Це дослідження сприяє розумінню того, як дитяча література опосередковує травму через текстові мережі та встановлює інтертекстуальність як фундаментальний механізм культурної передачі мудрості виживання та адаптивних здібностей у дедалі невизначенішому світі.

Introduction. The children's literature has undergone a significant transformation in recent decades, particularly in its engagement with themes of disaster, trauma, and recovery. As natural catastrophes, pandemics, and human-made disasters increasingly impact global communities, authors of children's literature have responded by creating narratives that help young readers navigate these complex realities. A distinctive characteristic of contemporary disaster literature for children is its sophisticated employment of intertextual strategies – the deliberate incorporation of references, allusions, and structural echoes from other texts, genres, and cultural narratives [Koliassa, 2015].

Intertextuality, as conceptualised by J. Kristeva (1980) and further developed by scholars such as G. Genette (1997) and G. Allen (2011), recognises that no text exists in isolation but instead emerges from and contributes to a complex network of textual relationships. In the specific context of children's disaster literature, these intertextual connections serve multiple purposes: they provide cognitive scaffolding for understanding traumatic events, offer emotional comfort through familiar narrative patterns, and establish frameworks for meaning-making in the aftermath of catastrophe. By weaving together elements from fairy tales, mythologies, historical narratives, and contemporary media, authors create textual environments where children can safely explore themes of loss, survival, and renewal [Babelyuk et al., 2021].

This research aims to analyse the function and effectiveness of intertextual strategies in contemporary children's disaster literature, emphasising how these techniques facilitate emotional processing, cultural understanding, and resilience-building among young readers facing or learning about catastrophic events.

The research tasks are to identify and categorize the primary forms of intertextuality present in selected disaster narratives for children, including direct quotations, allusions, structural parallels, and thematic echoes; to examine how specific intertextual elements serve pedagogical, therapeutic, and aesthetic functions within disaster narratives, particularly in relation to trauma processing and resilience development; to establish a comparative framework for analyzing intertextual strategies across different types of disasters (natural disasters, pandemics, conflict, climate change) and cultural contexts; to investigate how intertextual references facilitate the transmission of cultural knowledge, values, and coping mechanisms across generational and cultural boundaries.

The object of this research encompasses contemporary children's disaster literature published between 2000 and 2024, primarily focusing on novels and stories that explicitly engage with themes of natural disasters, pandemics, climate change, conflict,

and other catastrophic events while demonstrating significant intertextual dimensions.

The subject of investigation centres on the intertextual strategies employed within this literary corpus, specifically examining how authors construct meaning through textual networks, how these strategies function in relation to child development and trauma processing, and how intertextuality contributes to the broader cultural work of children's disaster literature in contemporary society.

Results and Findings. The concept of intertextuality, first articulated by J. Kristeva in her seminal work *"Desire in Language"* (1980), has evolved into one of the most influential theoretical frameworks in contemporary literary studies. J. Kristeva's assertion that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations" establishes that textual meaning emerges through complex networks of reference and allusion rather than isolated textual properties [Kristeva, 1980]. Building upon J. Kristeva's foundational work, G. Genette's *"Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree"* (1997), provides a systematic taxonomy of transtextual relationships, distinguishing between intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, and architextuality. This classificatory framework proves particularly valuable for analysing children's literature, where multiple forms of textual relationship often operate simultaneously within single narratives [Genette, 1997].

Contemporary scholars have refined these theoretical approaches regarding how intertextual strategies function within specific genres and readership contexts. G. Allen's *"Intertextuality"* (2011) comprehensively analyses how intertextual meaning-making operates across different literary traditions, while M. Orr's *"Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts"* (2003) examines intertextual practice's cultural and ideological dimensions. These theoretical developments provide essential groundwork for understanding how intertextuality functions within the specialised context of children's disaster literature [Allen, 2011; Orr, 2003].

The representation of trauma and disaster in children's literature has emerged as a significant area of scholarly inquiry, particularly following increased awareness of children's exposure to catastrophic events through global media and direct experience. H. Bosmajian's *"Sparing the Child: Grief and the Unspeakable in Youth Literature about Nazism and the Holocaust"* (2002) establishes important precedents for understanding how children's literature negotiates traumatic content, while maintaining developmental appropriateness [Bosmajian, 2002]. Recent works have increasingly recognised the therapeutic potential of disaster narratives for young readers. M. Tatar's *"The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales"* (2002) demonstrates how traditional narratives have

long served as vehicles for processing fear and uncertainty, establishing historical precedents for contemporary disaster literature [Tatar, 2002].

The application of intertextual analysis to children's literature has gained considerable momentum in recent decades, with scholars recognising the sophistication of textual relationships within narratives designed for young readers. S. Beckett's *"Recycling Red Riding Hood"* (2002) analyses how traditional narratives are reimagined and transformed within contemporary children's literature, while J. Zipes's extensive work on fairy tale adaptation demonstrates the ongoing vitality of intertextual transformation in children's publishing [Beckett, 2002; Zipes, 2006]. P. Nodelman's *"The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature"* (2008) offers crucial insights into how children's literature negotiates multiple readership levels through sophisticated intertextual strategies, arguing that effective children's literature must simultaneously engage child readers and adult mediators through layered textual relationships [Nodelman, 2008]. This dual-audience dynamic proves particularly relevant to disaster narratives, where adult concerns about protecting children from traumatic content must be balanced against children's need for honest engagement with complex realities.

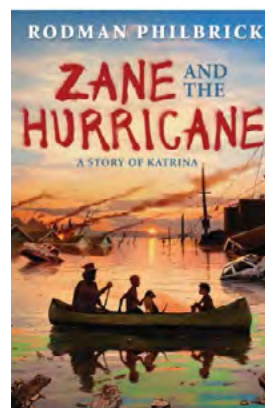
Despite growing scholarly attention to intertextuality and disaster representation in children's literature, significant research gaps remain at their intersection. While individual studies have examined specific aspects of textual relationships within disaster narratives, a comprehensive analysis of how intertextual strategies function systematically across the genre remains limited. Furthermore, empirical research on how child readers actually interpret and utilise intertextual elements in disaster literature is notably scarce, representing a crucial area for future investigation.

Recent global events, including climate change impacts, the COVID-19 pandemic, wars and the increasing frequency of natural disasters, have generated new waves of children's disaster literature that demand scholarly attention. These contemporary works demonstrate increasingly sophisticated intertextual strategies, suggesting that the intersection of intertextuality and disaster representation in children's literature represents a dynamic and evolving field requiring ongoing scholarly engagement.

Contemporary children's literature study recognises disasters as catalysts for exploring cultural displacement and identity formation themes. Recent natural disasters have challenged current crisis management and intervention models, demanding speedy, flexible and emergent social actors, and children's literature responds to these challenges by representing diverse community responses and highlighting the agency of young protagonists in disaster scenarios.

Natural disasters in children's literature encompass sudden-onset environmental events, including hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and wildfires. These catastrophic events serve as narrative catalysts and symbolic representations of broader themes concerning human vulnerability, community resilience, and environmental interconnectedness. Recent bibliometric analysis of international children's literature research has identified environmental themes as a significant emerging trend, with scholars increasingly examining how natural disaster narratives function as vehicles for environmental education and ecological consciousness-raising.

Representing natural disasters in children's literature operates on multiple levels simultaneously. At the literal level, these narratives provide young readers with age-appropriate frameworks for understanding environmental hazards and emergency preparedness. However, at deeper symbolic levels, natural disasters often function as metaphors for psychological disruption, social upheaval, and cultural transformation. For instance, hurricane narratives in contemporary children's literature frequently explore themes of displacement and community rebuilding, as exemplified in works such as R. Philbrick's *"Zane and the Hurricane"* (2014), which depicts both the immediate physical impacts of Hurricane Katrina and its longer-term effects on community identity and cultural continuity [Philbrick, 2014].



Pic. 1. The book's cover of R. Philbrick's novel "Zane and the Hurricane"

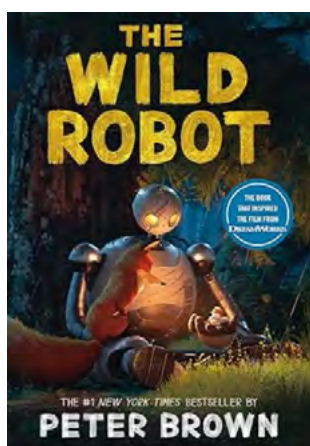
R. Philbrick's novel demonstrates sophisticated intertextual strategies that enable young readers to process the immediate trauma of Hurricane Katrina and its lasting sociocultural impacts. The story follows twelve-year-old Zane Dupree, a mixed-race boy visiting New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina strikes. He becomes separated from his family and must survive the flood with his dog. The novel's most prominent intertextual relationship operates through Noah's flood narrative, but with crucial inversions that reflect contemporary environmental and social

realities. Where the biblical flood represents divine judgment followed by covenant renewal, Katrina represents human environmental failure requiring human response and rebuilding. The author employs biblical flood language (“the waters rose,” “seeking higher ground,” “waiting for the waters to recede”) that activates readers’ cultural memory of flood narratives while maintaining realistic descriptions of hurricane flooding. The novel draws extensively from African American migration narratives, particularly those documenting the Great Migration and diaspora experiences. Zane’s forced displacement from New Orleans connects to broader African American community disruption and reformation patterns.

Climate change narratives in children’s literature often focus on specific environmental impacts such as rising sea levels, drought, extreme weather events, and species extinction. However, research indicates that effective climate change literature for children goes beyond simple environmental education to explore environmental change’s cultural and social dimensions. These narratives frequently examine how environmental degradation intersects with social vulnerability, exploring themes of environmental justice and the disproportionate impacts of climate change on marginalised communities.

The representation of environmental degradation in children’s literature has been identified as a significant trend in contemporary youth literature, with authors increasingly incorporating environmental themes into diverse narrative contexts. These narratives often employ hope-based approaches that emphasise child agency and collective action, countering climate despair with models of environmental stewardship and community organising.

P. Brown’s novel *“The Wild Robot”* (2016), about Roz, a robot stranded on a remote island who learns to coexist with wildlife, draws from multiple literary traditions to address environmental themes.



Pic. 2. The book’s cover of P. Brown’s novel “The Wild Robot”

The primary intertextual relationship operates through Mary Shelley’s *“Frankenstein”* (1818). Like Shelley’s creature, Roz is an artificial being who must learn what it means to be alive and find acceptance in a world that initially rejects her. However, Brown inverts Shelley’s Gothic framework – where rejection leads to monstrosity – by placing Roz in a natural environment where acceptance comes through environmental stewardship and care. The Tarzan narrative provides another layer, as Roz must learn the “language” of the wild community. However, Brown’s version challenges colonial implications by making the outsider a caretaker rather than a conqueror. Roz’s maternal relationship with the gosling Brightbill echoes Tarzan’s relationships with animals but emphasises nurturing over dominance. Traditional fables from Aesop provide structural intertextuality through clear moral lessons about environmental responsibility, while contemporary environmental picture books influence the novel’s gentle didactic approach. The intertextual strategies enable Brown to address complex issues about technology’s relationship with nature through familiar narrative patterns accessible to young readers [Brown, 2016].

Recent research has highlighted the therapeutic potential of environmental narratives in children’s literature, suggesting that well-crafted climate change stories can help young readers process environmental anxiety while developing ecological literacy and environmental citizenship. However, scholars have also noted the challenges of representing climate change for young audiences, including the risk of overwhelming readers with the scale and complexity of environmental challenges.

Slow-onset disasters, including climate change and environmental degradation, represent a relatively new category in children’s literature taxonomy, reflecting growing environmental consciousness and climate anxiety among young readers. Unlike sudden-onset disasters, these narratives must grapple with temporal complexity, representing changes that unfold over years or decades rather than hours or days. This temporal challenge has prompted innovative narrative approaches that employ intergenerational storytelling, speculative fiction elements, and non-linear narrative structures.

Human-made disasters in children’s literature encompass war, forced migration, urban displacement, and other catastrophic events resulting from human agency rather than natural phenomena. This category represents perhaps the most politically charged dimension of disaster literature for children, as these narratives inevitably engage with questions of power, justice, and historical memory [Tribunella, 2010]. Recent international children’s literature research analysis has identified war representation and crises as key areas of contemporary scholarly

focus, reflecting both historical patterns of conflict and emerging global challenges.

War narratives in children's literature have evolved significantly over the past two decades, moving from sanitised historical accounts toward more complex representations that acknowledge the ongoing impacts of armed conflict on children and families. Contemporary works increasingly focus on refugee experiences and displacement narratives, as exemplified in texts such as N. Davies' *"The Day War Came"* (2018) and Th. Lai's *"Inside Out and Back Again"* (2011). These narratives explore the intersection of individual trauma and collective cultural loss, examining how war disrupts not only physical safety but also linguistic identity, cultural practice, and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Urban displacement represents an emerging subcategory within human-made disaster literature, reflecting contemporary concerns about gentrification, housing insecurity, and community fragmentation. These narratives often focus on the gradual erosion of neighbourhood identity and the displacement of families from familiar cultural landscapes. Unlike sudden-onset disasters, urban displacement narratives explore slow-violence processes that unfold over months or years, requiring different narrative strategies for representing cumulative loss and adaptation.

T. Lai's novel-in-verse *"Inside Out and Back Again"* (2011) about ten-year-old Hà's journey from Vietnam to Alabama as a refugee creates formal and thematic intertextual connections. The verse structure draws from Vietnamese poetry traditions and American free verse, creating formal intertextuality that mirrors the protagonist's cultural bridging. The compressed, economical language echoes traditional Vietnamese poetry while adapting to English-language children's literature conventions. The book is structured to follow the main character, Hà's journey as a refugee. The story is a collection of titled poems, each with a date that marks the passage of a year. The book begins and ends with Tết, a Vietnamese holiday that celebrates the new lunar year and everyone's birthday. The novel is separated into four parts: "Saigon", "At Sea", "Alabama", and "From Now On".

*Every new year, Mother visits
the Ching Teller of Fate.
This year he predicts
our lives will twist inside out.*

*Maybe soldiers will no longer
patrol our neighborhood,
maybe I can jump rope
after dark,
maybe the whistles
that tell Mother
to push us under the bed
will stop screeching.*

*But I heard
On the playground
This year's nanh chu'ng,
Eaten only during Tet,
will be smeared in blood.*

*The war is coming
Closer to home [Lai, 2011].*

Hà's journey is a transformation; she is "turned inside out" by her new circumstances. The first and third parts of the book echo each other, as do the second and fourth parts. This is shown through mirrored experiences like Hà's friends in Vietnam versus the friends she makes in America, her being bullied in one part and then being the bully in another. By the end of the book, Hà has found equilibrium and is "put more to rights".

The book's strong beginning establishes Hà as a typical 10-year-old in South Vietnam, making the changes she endures throughout the story more impactful. Her concerns, both as a child and as a refugee, are relatable and universal.

Immigration literature traditions from *"Esperanza Rising"* by P. Muñoz Ryan to *"Seedfolks"* by P. Fleischman provide narrative frameworks. Hà's experience of loss and gradual adaptation follows established patterns, but the refugee context adds urgency that is absent from voluntary migration stories. Coming-of-age traditions, particularly loss-of-innocence narratives, inform the novel's structure. Hà's journey from a protected childhood in Saigon to premature responsibility in America follows classical Bildungsroman patterns while incorporating specific refugee experiences of cultural displacement: *"No one would believe me, but at times I would choose wartime in Saigon over peacetime in Alabama"* [Lai, 2011].

The representation of forced migration in children's literature has become increasingly sophisticated, moving beyond simple victim narratives toward complex portrayals that recognise refugee agency, cultural resilience, and the negotiation of hybrid identities. Contemporary investigations have noted how these narratives function as sites of cultural translation, introducing young readers to diverse migration experiences while challenging dominant cultural assumptions about belonging and citizenship.

Personal disasters in children's literature encompass family separation, loss of home or homeland, death of family members, and other catastrophic events that disrupt family systems and personal identity. While these disasters may not involve large-scale community disruption, they represent profound upheavals in children's lived experience and serve as entry points for exploring broader themes of attachment, loss, and resilience. Family separation narratives have become increasingly prevalent in contem-

porary children's literature, reflecting both historical patterns of family disruption and contemporary concerns about immigration enforcement, military deployment, and family dissolution. These narratives often explore the psychological impacts of parental absence while examining how children develop coping strategies and alternative support networks. Research in children's literature studies has noted how family separation narratives frequently employ epistolary formats, fantasy elements, and memory-based storytelling to represent the continuation of family bonds despite physical separation. The loss of home or homeland represents a particularly complex subcategory within personal disaster narratives, as these stories must navigate the intersection of physical displacement and cultural identity. Contemporary children's literature has shown increasing sophistication in representing the multiple dimensions of home loss, including physical spaces, linguistic environments, cultural practices, and community networks. These narratives often explore how children maintain connections to lost homelands through memory, storytelling, and cultural practice.

The 2025 collaboration between S. King and M. Sendak (posthumously through the Maurice Sendak Foundation) on the picture book "Hansel and Gretel" (2nd of September 2025 book release) provides a compelling contemporary example of how intertextuality functions within disaster narratives for children. This unique literary artefact demonstrates multiple layers of textual relationship, illuminating the theoretical frameworks discussed above while offering practical insights into how contemporary authors negotiate trauma representation for young audiences.

King and Sendak's adaptation operates through what can be termed "temporal intertextuality" – the convergence of multiple historical moments within a single text. The work draws simultaneously from the Brothers Grimm's 19th-century fairy tale collection, Sendak's unpublished illustrations created for a 1990s opera production, and King's contemporary narrative sensibilities shaped by 21st-century understanding of childhood trauma and resilience. This temporal layering creates what Genette would classify as a complex hypertextual relationship, where the new work transforms its source material through multiple mediating influences.

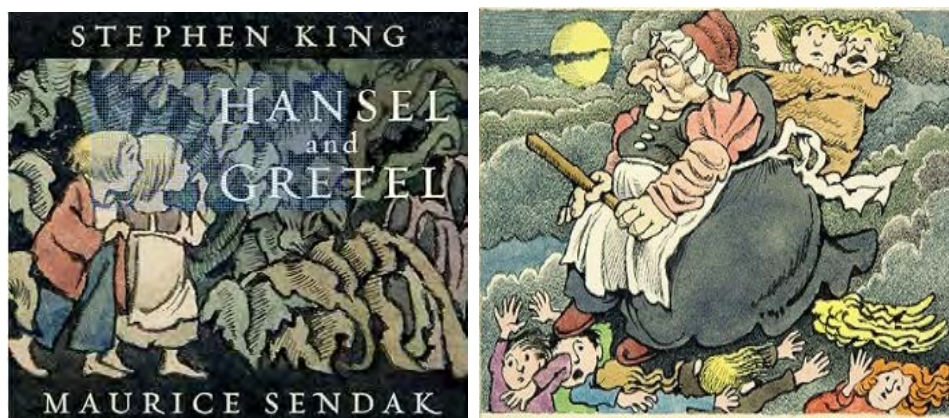
The collaboration represents a form of posthumous intertextuality, where Sendak's visual narrative continues to generate meaning through new textual partnerships years after the illustrator's death. This process utilised "unpublished drawings by Sendak intended for a 1990s opera production of the Brothers Grimm story", creating a palimpsestic effect where operatic, literary, and children's book traditions converge within a single narrative framework. "The *Hansel and Gretel*" story operates as what

might be termed a "foundational disaster narrative" – a tale structured around catastrophic abandonment, survival, and recovery that has provided a template for processing childhood trauma across cultures and centuries. King's adaptation maintains this disaster framework while updating its psychological sophistication. As King notes, while the story is "terrifying", it "teaches resilience and problem-solving to kids" because "Hansel and Gretel are brave children. They are resourceful kids".

This framing positions the fairy tale within contemporary trauma-informed approaches to children's literature, where disaster narratives serve pedagogical functions in building emotional resilience. The intertextual relationship between the traditional tale and contemporary child psychology creates what might be called "therapeutic intertextuality", where historical narratives are recontextualised through current understanding of childhood development and trauma processing. King's involvement brings particular significance to the horror elements inherent in the original tale, transforming what might otherwise be dismissed as dated folklore violence into a sophisticated exploration of controlled fear experience for children. King's philosophy that "fairy tales are supposed to be scary" because "they give children a taste of adult emotions" while providing "a happy ending" articulates a clear theory of how disaster narratives function therapeutically for young readers.

This approach demonstrates what we might call "calibrated catastrophe" – careful modulation of disaster elements to provide emotional stretch without overwhelming young readers. The intertextual relationship between King's horror sensibilities and traditional fairy tale structures creates a hybrid narrative mode that maintains psychological safety while engaging authentically with danger, abandonment, and survival themes.

Initially conceived for operatic performance, Sendak's illustrations bring additional intertextual complexity through their translation from theatrical to literary contexts. Maurice Sendak was born on June 10, 1928, in Brooklyn, New York, to Polish-Jewish immigrants Sadie (née Schindler) and Philip Sendak [Here & Now, 2025]. His father was a dressmaker, and both parents had immigrated to the United States from Poland [Enid News, 2025]. Sendak's Polish-Jewish heritage profoundly shaped his worldview and artistic work. On the day of his bar mitzvah in 1941, his father received word that their extended family in Europe had been wiped out by the Nazis [King & Sendak, 2025]. This traumatic revelation had a lasting impact on the young artist. As Sendak later recalled: "My father belonged to a Jewish social club. The day of my bar mitzvah, he got word [through the club] that he no longer had a family. Everyone was gone. And he lay down in bed" [Associated Press, 2025].



Pic. 3. The book's cover and illustrations of the picture book by S. King and M. Sendak, "Hansel and Gretel"

Sendak declared himself to be deeply affected by the Holocaust and the death of many of his family members during that time, having been introduced to the concept of mortality at such a young age [Publishers Weekly, 2025]. This early exposure to trauma and loss became a foundational element in his approach to children's literature, influencing his willingness to address difficult emotions and fears in his work (Pic. 3).

The collaboration describes how Sendak's hauntingly beautiful illustrations on every page draw readers into the deliciously daring world of Hansel and Gretel, suggesting that visual elements serve as emotional anchoring devices that help young readers navigate textual content that might otherwise prove overwhelming. This visual-textual relationship demonstrates how intertextuality operates across media forms, with illustrations as decorative elements and integral components of meaning-making systems. Sendak's visual interpretation provides what might be termed "emotional scaffolding" – familiar artistic approaches that help children process unfamiliar or challenging narrative content.

Death and loss narratives in children's literature have evolved to include more diverse grief, mourning, and memorialisation representations. Contemporary works increasingly acknowledge cultural differences in death practices while exploring how children navigate grief within family and community contexts. These narratives often examine the intergenerational transmission of memory and the role of storytelling in maintaining connections to deceased family members.

Conclusion. This examination of intertextuality in contemporary children's disaster literature reveals sophisticated mechanisms through which authors construct meaning and foster resilience in young readers confronting catastrophic events. Intertextual strategies are crucial mediating devices, enabling children to process traumatic experiences through familiar nar-

rative frameworks while maintaining developmental appropriateness and emotional accessibility. The research identifies key patterns across disaster categories. Natural disaster narratives consistently draw upon archetypal frameworks – biblical flood narratives, survival literature traditions, and cultural migration stories. Climate change narratives show innovative approaches to address technology-nature relationships. Human-made disaster literature reveals complex negotiations to mirror cultural bridging themes.

The linguistic analysis reveals that intertextual strategies operate through sophisticated vocabulary networks connecting contemporary disasters to cultural traditions of resilience. Authors employ personification language for natural forces, cycle and renewal terminology from mythological traditions, and agency-focused vocabulary that counters victim narratives while promoting active coping strategies.

Most significantly, intertextuality in children's disaster literature serves multiple functions: providing cognitive scaffolding, offering emotional containment, facilitating cultural transmission, supporting identity formation, and building community connections. These strategies demonstrate therapeutic potential, suggesting that well-crafted disaster narratives serve as bibliotherapeutic resources helping children process trauma while developing resilience and cultural competency. However, empirical studies examining how child readers interpret intertextual elements remain scarce, and emerging disaster types – pandemic literature, climate refugee narratives – demand ongoing analysis of evolving strategies. Intertextuality in children's disaster literature constitutes a fundamental mechanism through which cultures transmit survival wisdom and prepare young people to navigate uncertainty. As global disasters increase in frequency and complexity, the role of intertextually sophisticated children's literature in supporting emotional development and adaptive capacity will only grow in importance.

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