



Mythological Drawings from Turkish Elementary School Children

Hakan Pehlivan*

ABSTRACT This study explores what some children in Turkey represented in drawings of mythological cave visit, how they developed them, and the significance of the drawings. We describe, analyze, and compare drawings as a whole and with findings from other studies on child artmaking. Description includes cave visit experience in general, how they perceive the Cerberus mythology, the school context and related lesson. Analysis focuses on theme, schema, color, and space usage. Conclusions include summary of lesson, discussion of what was left out of the drawings and alternative explanations which include limited drawing abilities, gender differences, outside influences, and the essence of mythological drawing and the children's drawings.

Key Words: art education, mythology

The Importance of Stories and Storytelling

Humans have always told stories. It is one of the things that makes us human and distinguishes us from other creatures. Round the campfire in the evenings, long before television was invented, people told stories to one another. Stories were used to pass on real events, history and family connections, and also to entertain. They were used to teach children and to hand down values and customs from generation to generation. Long before writing, the only culture was oral, spoken culture. To tell stories is to participate, and to help children to participate, in one of the most ancient human customs.

Storytelling is the human action whether verbal or visual that conveys feelings and thoughts; it is as fluid as water taking many shapes and forms from dance to sculpture. Storytelling has also been part of formal education for many years. In the nineteenth century, student teachers were trained to tell stories. Stories have obvious significance in the teaching of literacy, but they are also important in other curriculum areas. Stories can be an invaluable tool for developing speaking and listening skills and as a stimulus for discussion or for philosophy and thinking skills. Stories can assist the development of social awareness and help children to build up an emotional vocabulary. History and geography, science, religious education (RE) and even maths can all come alive through stories. The beauty of storytelling in the classroom is that it works at different levels at the same time. Teachers are under pressure today to 'deliver' excellent basic skills, high academic results and emotionally literate and socially skilled children with highly developed thinking skills! Telling stories can contribute to all those areas at the same time. Listening to stories and telling stories can reduce stress in the classroom, promote literacy, speaking and listening skills, help children to develop thinking strategies and promote their social and emotional development – and all while they engage in a rewarding and enjoyable activity.

Today, the art of storytelling continues as we tell stories to children to communicate with them, entertain them, and pass on information. Anyone can read a story but, when a story is told, children feel a bond between the teller and themselves. In a society where parents lead busy lives and children are entertained by the impersonal communication media of films and television, storytelling can be an invaluable part of your program. An experience shared between teller and listener, it helps children develop the skills of listening and encourages them to visualize the story in their imaginations - to relax and fantasize safely.

*Erciyes University hpehlivan1@yahoo.com

It is this final part—the children’s reactions on which we want to focus. Maybe this is focusing the point, but if the Capturing of Cerberus story is a powerful, cultural, and aesthetic place, then what do the children draw, say, and record about it?

What is the Story of Heracles'?

The most dangerous labor of all was the twelfth and final one. Eurystheus ordered Hercules to go to the Underworld and kidnap the beast called Cerberus (or Kerberos). Eurystheus must have been sure Hercules would never succeed at this impossible task! The ancient Greeks believed that after a person died, his or her spirit went to the world below and dwelled for eternity in the depths of the earth. The Underworld was the kingdom of Hades, also called Pluto, and his wife, Persephone. Depending on how a person lived his or her life, they might or might not experience never-ending punishment in Hades. All souls, whether good or bad, were destined for the kingdom of Hades.

Cerberus was a vicious beast that guarded the entrance to Hades and kept the living from entering the world of the dead. According to Apollodorus, Cerberus was a strange mixture of creatures: he had three heads of wild dogs, a dragon or serpent for a tail, and heads of snakes all over his back. Hesiod, though, says that Cerberus had fifty heads and devoured raw flesh.

A weaponless Hercules set off to find Cerberus. Near the gates of Acheron, one of the five rivers of the Underworld, Hercules encountered Cerberus. Undaunted, the hero threw his strong arms around the beast, perhaps grasping all three heads at once, and wrestled Cerberus into submission. The dragon in the tail of the fierce flesh-eating guard dog bit Hercules, but that did not stop him. Cerberus had to submit to the force of the hero, and Hercules brought Cerberus to Eurystheus. Unlike other monsters that crossed the path of the legendary hero, Cerberus was returned safely to Hades, where he resumed guarding the gateway to the Underworld. Presumably, Hercules inflicted no lasting damage on Cerberus, except, of course, the wound to his pride! (Hercules' Twelfth Labor: Cerberus <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/Herakles/cerberus.html>)

Method and Procedure

The lesson offered to school’s head and art teacher and realized during the month of May 2006. Thus the study was exploratory in nature. Description is a process of reporting the events developed from data that are gathered by video recordings, photographs, and informal interviews. The teacher helped with his directions at the beginning of the lesson. Pehlivan wrote notes about how the children began their drawings and built their forms. We also asked children to describe the meaning of their pictures on the underneath of their papers. The teacher gave comments to the children throughout the study. Later, we noticed that the children’s drawings featured mostly Hercules figures. So, Pupils drawings were the primary data to explore. The next step is analysis of content. Repeated patterns, themes and concepts were searched.

Cave Visit

The study took place in a cave, called Hell Mouth, where is in town of Karadeniz Eregli. The Hell Mouth cave is situated 2 km away from city center. We hired a bus to take the pupils there.



Lesson and motivation

School's art teacher asked one class of sixth and seventh grade pupils (8 girls and 9 boys) to discuss cave's story and gave them little information what is going to do in the Cave. She believed that drawings "bring to life beliefs about the cave's story which is told between people lives in the Town." We passed out four pieces in A4 size paper, crayons and supporting pads to the pupils. We also asked them bring a cushion to sit in the Cave. We discussed the story with them. Children talked about previous visits to Cave. Most of them were been in the cave before. I told the story them once more. Even if they know the story, I wished to keep their attention in hyper situation. In this case, room temperature, noise level (echo), physical environment could create perfect atmosphere in the cave. Thus, their imagination could be empowered with the environment. I had already done telling practice in terms of gestures, voice level.

This motivational beginning proceeded for approximately five minutes in the Cave. We had to finish drawings outside of the cave because of coolness and humid. Pupils started to draw in pencil first, but mostly used crayons. Not all the students finish out four scenes.

Findings

Findings include 1) Fighting Hercules and Cerberus as the dominant themes; 2) Stalactites, mace as major schemas; 3) symmetrical arrangements for space depiction; and 4) typical realistic color usage. Explanations of these findings follow.

Scenes

1) Main scene which pupils depicted Hercules and Cerberus in a position of to encounter and Cerberus tied. 2) The Scene of Eurystheus' ordering to Hercules to go to the Underworld and capture the beast called Cerberus 3) Hercules with his Family 4) and the Scene of Hercules brought Cerberus to Eurystheus.

Use of Schema

Cave Schemas

Most of the pupils drew stalactites and any pupil drew the tiny lake inside the cave. Boys drew more elaborate cave structures than girls did. Two boys Kubilay and Aykut drew the Acheron Gate arched. Bedriye's drawing resembled a stereotypical mountain schema that stalactites hung to the mountain.



Figure 1 Stalactites are common interior element in most of the scenes

Mythological Figures

Six students drew Hercules dressed with fur. Four female students drew spotted furs with different colors. And zigzag bottom cut. A pupil said that He inspired the appearance of figures from Flint Stones Cartoon. Most of the students drew Hercules long haired, bearded and wearing cape. Hercules holds maze in his hand in most drawings. Most students drew people from the side view, but two students (a boy and a girl) drew humans from the front view. Two particularly advanced drawing, for instance, consisted of a Hercules, son and mother (from left to right) in rear view with another front view.

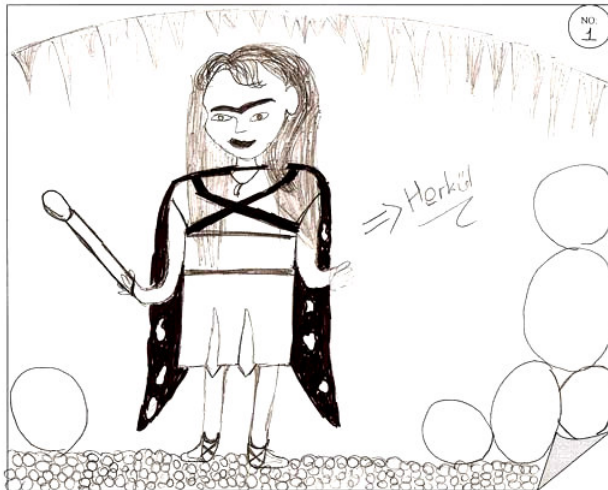


Figure 2 Hercules

Supernatural Creatures

Limited supernatural creatures drawn by pupils. Although Cerberus had three or fifty heads of wild dogs, pupils drew Cerberus three headed and a serpent for a tail.



Figure 3

Conclusions

The drawings mainly focused on 1) Capturing Scenes 2) Supernatural creatures notably Cerberus 3) pre-historic clothes and objects

What did the pupils express?

I discovered that the drawings revealed expressive content. Children revealed dramatic aspects of the story. Boys mostly interested in violence such as capturing the Cerberus scene. There was little expression at all, outside of depictions of cave stalactites and human figures with smiling faces.

Girls choose emotional aspects of the story such as murdering of Hercules' his family. (Figure 4) The children also excluded represent the some scenes such as Hercules' sailing to Black Sea with Argonauts. It would be say regard to this lesson that the mythological story drawings from Turkish children, revealed the characters, particularly the psychological dimension, through action.



Figure 4 Hercules is murdering his family

How did they draw? Children's drawings also tended to be more "ordered" than the spontaneous drawing. Cave's architecture with its amorphous structure certainly may have not intrigued the young children with its overwhelming size, sense of balance. Even darkness or

stalactites lined in a row and perpendicular to ceiling could be considered further evidence of controlled organization.

How does commercial and popular culture influence children? The children in this study tended to depict fancy fur dresses and talked about commercial influences such as Flint Stones Cartoon. Besides the school, the popular culture and the media seem to influence children.

References

- Dewey, J. (1934/1980). *Having an Experience. Art as Experience*. New York: Pedigree.
- Dissanayake, E. (1988) *What is art for?* Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Fox E., Jennifer M. (2005) *Classroom Tales : Using Storytelling to Build Emotional, Social and Academic Skills across the Primary Curriculum*. London, , GBR: Jessica Kingsley Publishers,
- Lowenfeld, V., & Brittain, W. L. (1987). *Creative and mental growth* (8th edition). NY: Macmillan.
- Rose, G. (2001). *Visual methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Stokrocki, M. (1997b). Rites of passage for middle school students. *Art Education*, 50(3), 48-55.

Türk İlköğretim Öğrencilerinden Mitolojik Çizimler

ÖZET Bu çalışma, Mitolojik öyküsüyle ünlenmiş bir mağaranın öğrenciler tarafından ziyaret edilmesi sonucunda çizdikleri resimleri, nasıl oluşturduklarını ve resimlerin belirgin özelliklerini incelemeye çalışır. Çalışmada çizimler tanımlanır, analiz edilir ve çocuk sanatının bilimsel bulgularına göre karşılaştırılır. Tanımlama genel olarak mağara ziyaretini içerir. Kerberus mitolojisini nasıl algıladıklarını okul ve ilgili ders kapsamında inceler. Analiz kısmında ise tema, biçim, renk ve kompozisyon üzerine odaklanılır. Bulgular dersin özetini incelerken, tartışma kısmı resimlerden geriye ne kaldığını, sınırlı çizim yetenekleri, cinsel farklılıklar, dış etkenleri dikkate alarak mitolojik çizim yaptırmanın doğası üzerine yoğunlaşır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: sanat eğitimi, mitoloji

ÖZET

Çalışmanın Amacı: İnsanlar tarihte birbirlerine hikâyeler anlatagelmışlerdir. Bu bizi insan yapan ve aynı zamanda diğer canlılardan ayıran bir özelliktir. Hikâyeler gerçek olayları, tarihi, aile bağlarını anlatma da kullanılırlardı. Çocukları eğitmede, nesilden nesile değerleri ve gelenekleri aktarma da işe yaramışlardır.

Altıncı ve yedinci sınıf öğrencileriyle, (8 kız ve 9 erkek) Cehennemağzı Mağarası ve burasıyla ilgili olan mitolojik öykü hakkında görüştük. Onlara, mağaraya girdiğimizde ne yapacağımızla ilgili bilgi verdik. Öyle inanıyorduk ki, onların çizimleri, Şehirdeki insanların mağara hakkındaki mitolojiyi kendi aralarında anlatışlarından ve bizim de bir kez daha anlatmamızdan kaynaklanan düşsellemenin hayat bulması demek olacaktı.

Özellikle çocukların hikâye hakkındaki reaksiyonlarına odaklandık. Bu, çalışmada asıl amaç noktasını oluştururken, Kerberus'un yakalanması hikâyesi güçlü, kültürel ve estetik bir olay olarak yerel halkın arasında yer edinmişti. Çocuklar ne çizecek, ne söyleyecek ti?

Yöntem: Çalışma keşfedici bir niteliğe sahiptir. Açıklayıcı tanımlamalardan, video görüntülerden, fotoğraflardan ve planlı olmayan görüşmelerden elde edilerek oluşturulmuştur. Sınıf öğretmeni çalışmanın başında ve devamında öğrencileri yönlendirmesiyle yardımcı olmuştur. Pehlivan öğrencilerin çizimlerine başladığı andan itibaren gördüklerini ve izlediklerini not etmiştir. Aynı zamanda öğrencilerden çizimlerinin altına çizimlerini anlatmaları için de yer bırakılmıştır. Çalışmanın bitimine doğru öğrencilerin çoğunlukla Herkül ve Kerberus figürleri çizdiklerini gözledik. Böylece bu çizimler incelenecek asıl veriyi oluşturdu. Diğer basamakta veriler analiz edildi. Tekrar eden çizimler, temaların ve kavramların olup olmadığı araştırıldı.

Bulgular: Bulgular şu şekildedir; 1) Baskın olarak Herkül ve Kerberus'u dövüşürken gösteren konular; 2) Ana figürler olarak mağara sarkıtları ve Herkül'ün topuzu; 3) Kompozisyonun oluşumunda kullanılan simetrik düzen 4) Tipik gerçekçi renklerin kullanımı. Bu bulguların açıklamalarının devamı gelmektedir.

Tartışma ve Sonuç: Çizimler çoğunlukla şiddetin ve acımanın yer aldığı ifadeci yaklaşımları içermektedir. Öğrenciler aynı zamanda aile cinayeti gibi dramatik yönleri de ortaya koymuşlardır. Erkek öğrenciler daha çok Kerberus'u yakalama sahnesini çizmişlerdir. Öğrenciler hikaye de geçen Argonotların Karadeniz seferi gibi bazı sahneleri hiç çizmemişlerdir. Bir mitolojinin resmettirilmesi uygulaması sonucunda şu söylenebilir ki; Türk öğrenciler karakterleri, psikolojik yönleri de dâhil ederek, aksiyon halinde çizmişlerdir.