



**Article Type:** Research Article

**Submitted Date:** 27.04.2026

**Accepted Date:** 26.09.2026

**Online publishing Date:** 27.09.2026

**2026, 9(1), Article ID: 1939035**

#### Reference Information

Arifoğlu, G. (2026). Trauma, emotional progression, and representations of recovery in two children's picturebooks: a comparative visual-narrative analysis. *International Journal of Children's Literature and Educational Research*, 9(1), Art ID: 1939035

## TRAUMA, EMOTIONAL PROGRESSION, AND REPRESENTATIONS OF RECOVERY IN TWO CHILDREN'S PICTUREBOOKS: A COMPARATIVE VISUAL-NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

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### Abstract

This study aims to examine how emotional progression is represented textually and visually in two illustrated children's books that address traumatic events. The study adopts the emotional stages developing along the "Trauma-Acceptance-Hope" continuum as an analytical framework; the characters' transformations are evaluated in the context of text, color, composition, perspective, figure-space relationships, and body language. Conducted using a qualitative research approach, the study employs visual narrative analysis and qualitative content analysis techniques. The findings indicate that both books structure traumatic experiences within a phased and coherent narrative that moves from loss and insecurity toward acceptance, hope, and reconnection. It was determined that emotional transitions are supported, in particular, by changes in the color palette, shifts in composition, the use of perspective, and brief, emotion-focused text. These characteristics suggest that the books under examination possess the potential to serve as

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suitable representations for bibliotherapeutic readings in terms of processes such as empathy, recognizing emotions, and making sense of traumatic experiences. However, since no data were collected from child readers in this study, no causal conclusions can be drawn regarding the books' effects on children's emotional regulation, self-awareness, resilience, or healing processes. The study contributes to the analysis of representations of trauma and healing in picture books within the context of text-image integration; it emphasizes the necessity to examine the potential functions of these books in educational and psychological counseling settings through applied studies conducted with child readers.

**Keywords:** Illustration, Children's Literature, Picture Books, Visual Literacy.

## INTRODUCTION

Children's books are a rich and vibrant visual world created by combining basic design principles and creative narrative techniques (Öner, 2007). In this world, children encounter diverse characters, exploring their personality traits and the relationships they form with others. These encounters provide children with indirect life experiences. Books also have a healing and supportive effect on individuals (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1986). Literature offers new perspectives, allowing us to evaluate events from different perspectives and, in this respect, contributes to the healing of inner wounds. Through reading, we witness many experiences we do not have the opportunity to experience directly, developing new knowledge and emotional awareness (Rainfield, 2003). Books with a powerful literary and profound meaning both have a healing effect on human psychology and can activate certain inner strengths within a person. Sometimes, they can lead to sadness, sometimes excitement, and immersion in entirely different worlds and creative explorations (Gresham et al. 2001). However, the process of reading helps people realize their shared humanity and that the events they experience are common and not unique to them. This awareness allows them to understand that everyone experiences traumas, emotions, fears, and various problems in their lives. This awareness helps them understand themselves and others more deeply.

Books also offer children and adults the opportunity to experience different emotional states from a safe and distant perspective. Observing the difficulties experienced by characters enhances reader empathy and provides internal guidance on how to respond when faced with similar situations. Well-written children's books, in particular, play a crucial role in fostering psychosocial skills such as emotion regulation, problem-solving, and resilience (Forgan, 2002; Nikolajeva, 2014; Op de Beeck, 2020; Öner, 2007). Thus, reading becomes a tool

not only for acquiring knowledge but also for emotional healing and empowerment.

### **Bibliotherapy in Children's Literature**

Bibliotherapy, in its most general sense, is the use of books as a tool to help individuals cope with their problems (Aiex, 1993). When faced with an emotional challenge or a complex situation, people often discover strength in reading the stories of others who have had similar experiences. This way, they realize they are not alone and, by observing the paths of others, develop strategies they can apply in their lives.

This method is particularly effective for children. Children's books, with their symbols, visuals, and simplified language, help children understand complex emotions (Osgood, 2017). Teachers or educators can consciously use bibliotherapy to help children recognize, express, and learn to cope with challenging emotions (Gerstem, 1998). In this way, children can empathize with the characters they read, develop new approaches to their own problems, and build emotional resilience. To this end, stories contribute to individuals' self-discovery while also enabling the recognition and learning of previously unconsidered alternatives through the different solutions offered (Op de Beeck, 2020). Through these narratives, individuals can view the world through the eyes of others and witness how emotions and experiences can differ. This way, they learn to view events from different perspectives rather than just one. This multiple perspective helps individuals move away from stereotyped thinking and contributes to both emotional healing and personal development. In this context, bibliotherapy has shaped an important field (Doll & Doll, 1997).

Bibliotherapy is not only a problem-solving approach; it is also an educational and therapeutic support that contributes to processes of emotion regulation, self-awareness, social skills, and inner empowerment (Öner, 2007). Therefore, quality children's literature, used consciously in educational settings, emerges as a powerful tool that supports both learning and healing.

Bibliotherapy is generally implemented for two primary purposes: developmental and clinical (Rıza, 1997). Developmental bibliotherapy is a method used by educators and professionals to support children in coping with emotional and social difficulties that may arise during normal development. For example, reading a story about how a child who has lost their mother overcame another character who experienced a similar loss can help the child understand the trauma they experienced, name their emotions, and identify with someone else who has coped with those emotions. Such a narrative experience can reduce a child's fears

and positively contribute to the healing process by improving empathy (Smidt, 2013).

This approach, frequently used in educational settings, supports children in coping healthily with challenges specific to their developmental stages. Developmental bibliotherapy, which contributes to their emotional, social, and cognitive development, serves as a crucial tool for both protection and empowerment.

### **Conceptual Framework and Analytical Model of Sequential Emotional Progression**

In this study, sequential emotional progression is conceptualized as a researcher-developed analytical framework for examining how changes in a character's represented emotional state unfold across a narrative. It refers to the predominantly chronological and causally connected organization of emotional change through verbal and visual narrative resources. The framework describes patterns of representation within picturebooks rather than proposing a universal or clinically defined model of trauma recovery.

A distinction should be made between linear narrative and sequential emotional progression. Linear narrative concerns the temporal and causal organisation of events, generally presenting them through a beginning, development, and resolution. Sequential emotional progression, by contrast, focuses on how the character's represented inner states change throughout this narrative sequence. Therefore, a story may follow a chronological order without presenting a clear emotional transformation. Sequential emotional progression requires observable changes in emotions, relationships, bodily expressions, perceptions of safety, and orientations toward the future.

The narrative dimension of the framework draws on structural approaches that explain narratives through movements from orientation and complicating action toward evaluation and resolution (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). However, the framework does not directly reproduce the categories of Labov and Waletzky. Instead, it uses the principle of sequential narrative organisation to examine how emotional states are represented across the beginning, middle, and closing sections of picturebooks.

The psychological dimension of the framework is informed by trauma literature, particularly Herman's (1992, 1998) emphasis on safety, remembrance, and reconnection. Nevertheless, the stages used in the present study should not be understood as fixed, universal, or clinically consecutive stages of psychological recovery. Trauma recovery is a complex and potentially non-linear process.

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Accordingly, the framework analyses how recovery is represented within the selected books rather than assuming that child readers experience the same process. For this reason, the original “Trauma–Acceptance–Hope” classification has been revised as “Trauma and Disruption–Negotiation and Adaptation–Hope and Reconnection.” These categories describe the representational organisation of the books and do not constitute a clinical model.

The framework is also related to bibliotherapy because fictional narratives may offer opportunities for identification, emotional engagement, reflection, and insight (Doll & Doll, 1997; Shrodes, 1949). In picturebooks, these opportunities are constructed not only through verbal narration but also through the interaction between words and images. Meaning emerges from the combined use of color, composition, perspective, spatial organisation, figure placement, and body language (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001). Therefore, the present framework considers verbal and visual indicators together.

The analytical framework was operationalised through the following stages and indicators (see Table 1):

**Table 1.** Dimensions of the Sequential Emotional Progression Analysis Form

| Analytical stage                  | Narrative and emotional indicators                                                                                             | Verbal indicators                                                                                                                                    | Visual indicators                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Trauma and Disruption</b>      | Threat, loss, separation, displacement, fear, loss of control and safety                                                       | Words and expressions associated with fear, anger, loss and uncertainty; fragmented or short sentences; repetition; silence and unanswered questions | Dark or desaturated colors; restricted or empty spaces; small or marginalised figures; high-angle perspectives; closed or protective body postures              |
| <b>Negotiation and Adaptation</b> | Journey, uncertainty, search for meaning, encounters with unfamiliar environments, attempts to establish routine and belonging | Questions, conditional expressions, references to searching, waiting, remembering, communication and daily routines                                  | Transitional colors; asymmetrical or changing compositions; unstable spatial relations; shifts in perspective; gradual movement of the figure toward the centre |

|                              |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Hope and Reconnection</b> | Renewed safety, supportive relationships, belonging, emotional openness and orientation toward the future | Expressions of hope, trust, togetherness and continuity; affirmative statements; narrative closure | Warmer and lighter colors; open and balanced compositions; eye-level perspective; central or larger figures; close framing and open body postures |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

This framework is important for children’s literature research because it makes it possible to examine how abstract emotional states are rendered visible and narratively comprehensible through the interaction of text and image. However, the identification of these features demonstrates only the books’ representational and bibliotherapeutic potential. Since the study does not collect data from child readers, it does not claim that the books produce psychological recovery, emotional regulation, resilience, or other measurable effects.

The sequential conveyance of emotions allows children to develop stronger empathy with the character (Nodelman, 2008). Sudden and uncertain transitions of emotion can confuse. Therefore, linear fiction offers children a structure that is cognitively accessible, emotionally safe, easy to follow, and educational. Therefore, it can be said that linear narrative structure is widely preferred, especially in picture books for preschool and elementary school students (Crum, 2008).

### **Purpose**

This study aims to examine how trauma, emotional progression, and recovery are represented through verbal and visual resources in two children’s picture books. It specifically investigates how color, composition, perspective, figure–space relations, and body language contribute to the representation of the characters’ movement from loss, displacement, and insecurity towards safety, hope, and reconnection. The study also evaluates the narrative and visual features of the selected books in terms of their potential relevance to bibliotherapeutic reading. Since no data were collected from child readers, the study does not assess actual reader responses, psychological effects, or therapeutic outcomes. Instead, it focuses on the representational and interpretive possibilities offered by the books’ verbal and visual structures.

In line with this purpose, the study addresses the following research questions:

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1. How are trauma and emotional progression represented verbally and visually in the selected children's picture books?
2. How do color, composition, perspective, figure-space relations, and body language contribute to the representation of recovery and reconnection?
3. How can these verbal and visual features be evaluated in terms of the books' potential relevance to bibliotherapeutic reading?

### METHOD

This study was designed as a qualitative comparative document analysis. The selected picturebooks were examined using visual narrative analysis and qualitative content analysis. Visual narrative analysis was preferred because the study focuses on how verbal and visual resources—including color, composition, perspective, figure-space relations, and body language—jointly construct representations of trauma, emotional progression, and recovery.

The study material consisted of *Far from Home* (Refugee) and *My Invisible House*. The books were selected through criterion sampling rather than on the basis of popularity, sales figures, awards, or assumed prominence in the literature. The following inclusion criteria were applied:

1. being a contemporary children's picturebook available in Turkish;
2. addressing traumatic experiences such as war, forced migration, displacement, separation, or loss;
3. presenting the experience primarily through the perspective of a child character;
4. including an observable emotional progression from threat, loss, or insecurity toward adaptation, hope, safety, or reconnection;
5. constructing meaning through the complementary use of verbal and visual narrative resources; and
6. being accessible in print during the data collection process.

These criteria were selected because they correspond directly to the purpose and research questions of the study.

Data were collected and organized using the researcher-developed Sequential Emotional Progression Analysis Form for Picturebooks. The form was designed to examine the emotional progression, visual language, and verbal-visual

organization of picturebooks addressing themes such as trauma, loss, migration, death, bereavement, and uncertainty. It was used as a structured qualitative analysis guide rather than as a measurement scale.

The first section of the form records descriptive information about each book, including its title, author and illustrator, publisher, year of publication, reviewer, and date of analysis. The main part consists of 13 open-ended questions organized under six analytical dimensions. The structure of the form is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Dimensions of the Sequential Emotional Progression Analysis Form

| Analytical dimension                                     | Number of questions | Focus of analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Emotional stages of the narrative</b>                 | 3                   | The dominant emotion at the beginning of the story, the emotional transformation represented during the development of the narrative, and indications of emotional balance, safety, or recovery in the closing section. |
| <b>Composition</b>                                       | 2                   | The correspondence between compositional organization and emotional transitions, and the contribution of the placement of visual elements to the beginning-development-conclusion sequence.                             |
| <b>Perspective</b>                                       | 2                   | The relationship between figure and space and the ways in which changes in perspective contribute to representations of uncertainty, safety, and recovery.                                                              |
| <b>Color-emotion relationship</b>                        | 2                   | Changes in color in parallel with the emotional progression of the narrative and the use of color to represent emotional balance and safety.                                                                            |
| <b>Textual structure and visual organization</b>         | 2                   | The continuity between text and image throughout the emotional progression and the gradual visual transition from tension toward relief.                                                                                |
| <b>Character body language and emotional progression</b> | 2                   | Changes in the character's posture and bodily expression from the beginning to the end of the narrative and the correspondence between body language and emotional transformation.                                      |

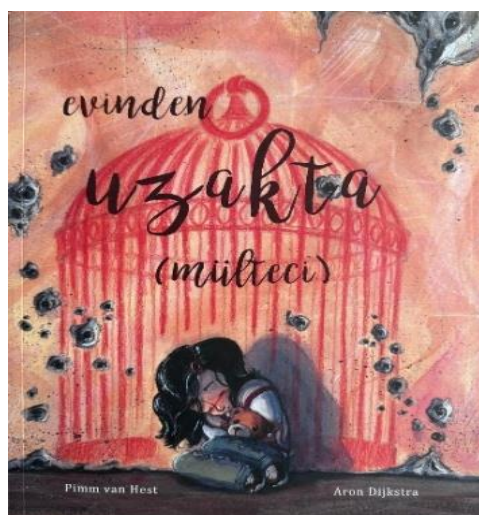
**Note.** The form comprises 13 open-ended questions across six analytical dimensions.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis results of two children's books examined as part of the research, and interpretations are made based on the findings. Both works were evaluated according to established analysis criteria and comparatively analyzed in terms of their content, visual structure, psychological plot, and potential impact on child readers. The analyses reveal each book's unique narrative strategies and the interaction it establishes with the reader.

### Analysis of the Book "Far from Home (Refugee)"

In this section, firstly, the children's book "Far from Home (Refugee)" was examined in terms of content, visual design, and psychological fiction; the findings are presented in Table 1.



**Figure 1.** Cover of the book "Far from Home (Refugee)" (Hest & Dijkstra, 2017)

**Table 3.** Emotional and visual analysis findings of the book "Far from Home (Refugee)" according to linear psychological fiction

| Theme | Subcodes | Textual Findings | Visual Findings | Psychological Function / Comment |
|-------|----------|------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
|-------|----------|------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|

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|                                        |                                                               |                                                                                                              |                                                                           |                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Trauma and Destruction                 | War, fear, loss, despair                                      | “The streets in your village, in your town, have been bombed... You are sad, you are afraid, you are angry.” | Dark tones, ruined buildings, bullet holes, crows, a small, lonely figure | It reflects the first stage of trauma: the perception of shock and threat. The child externalizes the danger. |
| Escape and Uncertainty                 | Insecurity, separation, journey, questions                    | "We have to escape... We can't stay here... How long? With whom?"                                            | Expanding spatial perspective, shrinking figure, light gray-purple colors | It symbolizes moving away from the safe zone and loss of direction.                                           |
| Efforts for Harmony and Contact        | Foreign countries, cultural differences, acceptance-rejection | “Those who accept you... and those who do not.”                                                              | Lone figure in the crowd, unfamiliar gazes, cold tones                    | It shows social identity conflict and the search for belonging.                                               |
| Signs of Inner Resilience and Recovery | Play, school, friendship, routine                             | “You just want to go back to school... to be in class with your friends...”                                  | Pastel colors, floral patterns, safe sleep scene in bed                   | It symbolizes the phase of re-establishing trust and making sense of the trauma.                              |
| Hope and Reconnection                  | Sentences of trust, belonging, home again, hope               | “You feel the sun shining... You will never be far from home again.”                                         | Bright yellow-blue background, pigeons, wide sky                          | It reveals a stage of healing, peace, and a sense of belonging.                                               |

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|                                              |                                               |                                                                                             |                                                                    |                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Universal<br>Message of<br>Peace and<br>Love | Humanity,<br>solidarity,<br>common<br>destiny | "There is<br>only one<br>nation:<br>humanity.<br>There is<br>only one<br>destiny:<br>love." | White dove,<br>symbols of<br>peace,<br>colorful city<br>silhouette | It supports the<br>idea that trauma is<br>universal, not a<br>personal, reality;<br>it provides hope-<br>focused closure. |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

These findings (Table 3) demonstrate that the book is built on a linear healing narrative, both in terms of content and design, and can structure feelings of awareness, empathy, and hope in child readers. The book presents challenging themes, particularly refugee status, loss, migration, and war, with a progressive, healing narrative model appropriate for child psychology. Thus, it serves as a powerful resource for use in both classroom emotional education and bibliotherapy practices. Upon detailed examination, the resulting explanations, based on the analysis form, are interpreted as follows.

**The Story's Emotional Stages and Linear Psychological Structure**

In the book under review, the emotional process unfolds linearly, extending from trauma to hope. The story begins with feelings of devastation, loss, and fear caused by war; then, themes of uncertainty, alienation, and exclusion related to the migration process are explored; and finally, feelings of trust, acceptance, and healing are explored. This sequence of emotions parallels the child's psychological developmental stages. While intense fear and helplessness dominate the beginning, by the end of the narrative, hope and reconnection become evident. In this respect, the book presents the emotional flow not as vague or cyclical, but as a gradual healing process.

**The Harmony of Visual Composition with the Emotional Process**

The book's visuals are designed to support emotional transitions. In the trauma sections, figures are confined to the lower corners of the page, space is narrowed, and the use of shadow and void is intensified. In the escape and journey scenes, space is expanded, but the child's figure is minimized, reinforcing the sense of loneliness and vulnerability. In the final section, the figure moves closer to the center, and the sense of home is reinforced in the interior scenes, and objects of security, such as windows and beds, become prominent. Thus, the composition is used not only to illustrate the narrative but also to convey the emotional charge visually.

**The Role of Perspective in Psychological Impact**

In the opening scenes, the camera angle is largely focused on the child, favoring an overhead view that creates a sense of threat for the audience. This visually reinforces the child's passivity and fearful position. As the story progresses, the perspective drops to eye level, and more scenes appear from the child's own perspective. In the final pages, the perspective shifts entirely to horizontal, bright compositions, approaching the child's inner world. Thus, the use of perspective becomes both an emotional and perceptual indicator of the transition from trauma to healing.

### **Color–Emotion Relationship**

Color functions as one of several visual resources contributing to the representation of emotional change in the narrative. Black, gray, rusty orange, and deep purple dominate the opening scenes of destruction and displacement. During the journey, pale blue and muted yellow appear alongside the darker palette, visually supporting the uncertainty and transitional quality of this stage. Toward the end of the narrative, lighter blue, yellow, and white become more prominent as the character encounters shelter, relational support, and a renewed orientation toward the future.

These color shifts should not be interpreted as fixed psychological symbols or as evidence of recovery in child readers. Their significance emerges contextually through their interaction with setting, composition, perspective, body language, and verbal narration. Accordingly, the movement from darker and desaturated colors toward lighter tones contributes to the narrative representation of a transition from threat and displacement toward provisional safety, hope, and reconnection. Figure 2 schematically summarizes the dominant palette changes identified through close reading.



**Figure 2.** Schematic color-palette progression in *Far from Home* (Refugee)

**Note.** The figure represents dominant palette changes identified through qualitative visual analysis; it is not based on instrumental color measurement and does not indicate a measured psychological or therapeutic effect.

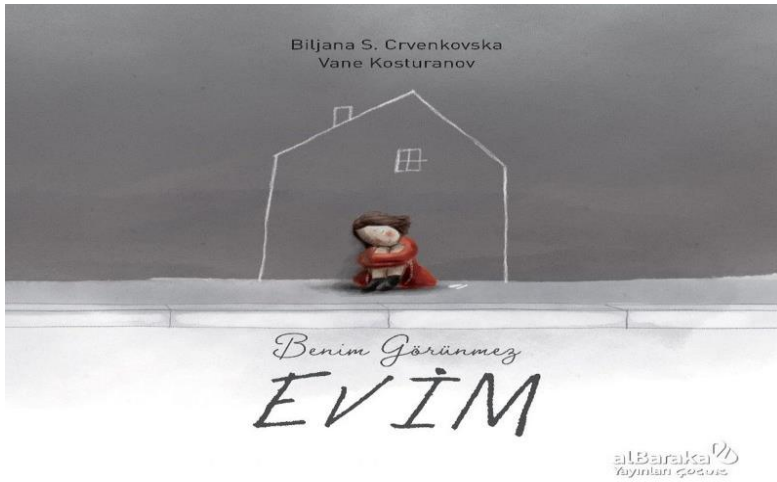
### **Text-Visual Integrity and Bibliotherapeutic Impact**

The text, with its short phrases and repetitive rhythmic sentences, reflects the child's internal monologue. In the trauma scenes, the text becomes sparse, and gaps create emotional resonance spaces. In the recovery section, the text becomes more fluid, and repetition reinforces a sense of hope: Phrases like "Never! Never! Never!" reflect both the denial of trauma and the desire for security. When the visuals and text are considered together, it becomes clear that the book is designed not only as a storyteller but also as a bibliotherapeutic tool that helps regulate emotions.

### **Body Language and Indicators of Psychological Recovery**

The character's change in body language is one of the book's most powerful indicators of recovery. Initially constricted and closed in a protective reflex, his body language becomes tired and stooped during the escape process, taking on a timid yet observant stance in the new country. In the final chapters, his body language opens up, with the boy depicted sleeping safely in bed and transformed into a figure looking up at the sky in the final scene. This transformation psychodynamically symbolizes the reestablishment of a sense of security after trauma.

### **Analysis of the Book "My Invisible House"**



**Figure 3.** Cover of the Book "My Invisible House" (Crvenkovska, & Kosturanov, 2022)

In the second children's book examined in this study (My Invisible House), the post-traumatic emotional healing process is structured within a linear psychological narrative structure, encompassing three main stages: Loss and Trauma, Dissonance and Search, and Hope and Reconnection. These three stages are observed to progress in a sequential emotional flow, both in textual and visual narratives (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Emotional and Visual Analysis Findings of the Book "My Invisible House" According to Linear Psychological Fiction

| Theme                 | Subcodes                                            | Textual Findings                                                                 | Visual Findings                                  | Psychological Function/Comment                              |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Trauma and Separation | Loss, uncertainty, loss of control                  | Whispers, adult discourse; the child's inability to understand what is happening | Monochrome gray, large space, small figure       | Establishing threat perception and distrust                 |
| Escape and journey    | Movement, night, sea                                | Continuous progress, non-stop transitions                                        | Starry sky, distant horizon, diminishing scale   | "Moving away from the realm of security, seeking resilience |
| Estrangement          | Language/culture differences, loneliness in a crowd | "Strange language, expressionless faces                                          | Selective red (tram), grey city, repeating tents | The tension between identity and belonging                  |
| Search for Harmony    | Routine, waiting, signs of hope                     | Waiting for the morning, watch the horizon                                       | Gray-orange sunrise transition                   | The beginning of emotion regulation and meaning making      |

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|                          |                          |                                                |                                                                       |                                                                        |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hope and<br>Reconnection | Contact, love,<br>family | Hugging,<br>returning<br>“inside” the<br>house | Warm palette<br>(orange-pink-<br>purple),<br>close-up<br>body contact | Repairing<br>attachment;<br>internalizing<br>the “invisible<br>house.” |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**The Emotional Stages and Linear Psychological Structure of the Story**

In the children's book *My Invisible Home*, the traumatic experience of forced migration and displacement is constructed through a linear emotional flow. The story conveys the trauma experienced by the child within the context of a three-stage emotional process: trauma (disconnection), uncertainty (alienation), and reconnection (hope and recovery). The first stage is dominated by the character's feelings of "loss of control" and "lack of meaning", reinforced by grey and cold tones. In the second stage, the child is physically and emotionally left in "limbo", meaning he or she is alienated from safe and familiar spaces and re-examines his or her identity. In the final stage, the child symbolically reconnects with a safe figure (his or her grandmother); this bond renews the child's sense of inner security, transforming the concept of "home" into an emotional rather than a spatial phenomenon. This linear progression emphasises the importance of continuity in emotional regulation and helps the child reader make sense of the post-traumatic reconstruction process.

**The Harmony of Visual Composition with the Emotional Process**

The book's visual composition is designed to parallel the stages of the emotional journey. The initial scenes are dominated by large spaces, disparate figure placements, and an asymmetrical composition, which evoke a sense of trauma and a loss of balance. The page layout frequently relegates figures to the bottom or margins, representing the narrator's passivity and sense of "exclusion." In the middle scenes, crowded compositions and repetitive spatial elements (tents, a train station crowd) emphasize the child's "individual self" disappearing within the crowds. As the recovery phase progresses, the composition gains balance, the figure moves closer to the center, and the gaps give way to close framing. This visual transformation completes the emotional flow of the text and suggests to the viewer the character's psychological integration.

**The Role of Perspective in Psychological Impact**

Perspective is a key narrative tool in the book, symbolizing the child's post-traumatic state. The initial pages favor bird's-eye and wide-angle perspectives, visualizing the child's "diminished" perception. The enlargement of space

reinforces the character's sense of powerlessness and vulnerability. In the middle sections, perspective frequently shifts to a heightened perspective, representing an anxious uncertainty. In the tent and city scenes, depth perception is limited, providing a visual response to the character's search for direction and identity. However, as the recovery phase progresses, the perspective drops to eye level, and the figures are framed in close-up. This transformation metaphorically embodies the child's process of "coming to eye level with the world." Thus, the use of perspective serves not only as an aesthetic but also as a psychological mapping function.

### **The Emotional Evolution of Colors**

The book reflects the emotional process from trauma to recovery through the gradual transformation of the color palette. Grey, blue-grey, and neutral tones, which dominate the early scenes, represent emotional detachment, coldness, and emptiness. These colors visualize the post-traumatic state of emotional numbness. Selective accent colors, such as tent orange and tram red, that become prominent in the middle pages, represent alienation but also a kind of focus of attention. As the healing process progresses, warm colors (orange, pink, red sunrise, and yellow sky) become increasingly dominant; this palette reflects the character's emotional security and reconnection. In the book's closing scene, the combination of figures in a warm palette of white and light tones represents inner peace and the embodiment of the metaphor of "home". Thus, colors are not merely aesthetic choices but conceptual elements that gradually follow emotional development (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Linear Emotional Healing Process (Color Chart)

### **CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION**

This study revealed that the use of linear psychological plots in trauma-themed children's picture books supports children's capacity to make sense of emotional processes. In the book reviewed, the gradual structuring of the emotional progression along the lines of "trauma-uncertainty-adaptation-hope-recovery" facilitated the child's identification with the character and the sequential identification of emotional stages. This is consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's

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(1984) emotion regulation model, contributing to the child's experience of a traumatic event as "a comprehensive, understandable set of processes, not a chaotic one."

The deliberate use of color, composition, and perspective in art-based narratives is also noteworthy. The design of visual language in parallel with the emotional flow strengthens the healing function of the text. This finding supports McNiff's (2009) emphasis on the "non-verbal healing potential" of art. The progression of color transitions from darkness to light, figure-space relations from being trapped to being free, and body language from being closed to being opened, establish a visual psychological order that rebuilds a sense of trust in the child reader. Furthermore, the textual discourse used in the book (short sentences, inner voice, repetitions) is appropriate for the child's cognitive capacity and functions as a verbal mediator to alleviate emotional tension. This is consistent with the interpretation of "the story's function as an emotional regulation tool" by Heath and Smith (2017), who study the bibliotherapeutic use of children's literature.

Finally, this refugee-themed narrative not only represents the traumatic experience but also shifts the child from the passive victim to the subject capable of generating hope. In this respect, it is closer to the "hero-recovering child narrative" model proposed by Mayer and Estrella (2014) rather than the "trauma pornography" approach criticized in the literature.

Another book examined in this study, the illustrated children's book *My Invisible Home*, appears to construct the post-traumatic emotional healing process in a multilayered manner through both textual and visual codes. Rather than directly portraying the trauma, the story portrays the effects of forced migration on children's psychology through indirect symbolic narrative, color transitions, perspective shifts, and the transformation of bodily gestures. This method is believed to reduce the risk of exposing the child to repetition of trauma while increasing the potential for empathy and identification. The linear progression of the emotional journey—trauma, alienation, hope, and reconnection— is consistent with both the classical narrative scheme (exposition–knot–resolution) and developmental psychology models (Bowlby, 1988; Kübler-Ross, 1969; van der Kolk, 2014). This linear structure supports the child's integration of the experience over time, contributing to the post-traumatic cognitive-behavioral adjustment process.

Visual analysis revealed a shift in the book's color palette from cool grays to warm oranges and pinks. This shift serves as a powerful code for rebuilding emotional warmth and visualizing psychological safety. Similarly, the use of

perspective played a significant role in the transition from trauma to healing; the initial pages, dominated by a heightened perspective, gave way to an eye-level perspective in the final chapters, signaling the child's restoration of sensory-physical harmony. These data demonstrate that the book has both emotional representation and healing (bibliotherapeutic) potential for child readers. The gradual changes in setting, color, and character gestures are structured to help children visualize and recognize abstract emotional states. In this respect, the book is believed to be a powerful resource for use both in the classroom and in psychological counseling.

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**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

There are no potential conflicts of interest relating to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

**Support/Funding Information**

No financial support was received for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

**Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence**

No artificial intelligence tools were used in the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.