How did I build resilience in my own experience of Hurricane Katrina? What children's books already exist that deal with disaster? How can I write and illustrate a children's book that functions as a curriculum resource for elementary art teachers and promotes resilience building in response to climate disasters?

Research Questions

How did I build resilience in my own experience of Hurricane Katrina? What children's books already exist that deal with disaster? How can I write and illustrate a children's book that functions as a curriculum resource for elementary art teachers and promotes resilience building in response to climate disasters?

Methods and Materials

Narrative autoethnography was used to investigate stories and narratives from my experience of Katrina. Content analysis was used to investigate existing children's books relevant to the study. From this data, a children's book was written and illustrated as a curriculum resource for elementary art teachers and promotes resilience building in response to climate disasters.

Results

I identified a few key themes in my autoethnographic writing that were included as part of my children's book:

- Destruction/rebuilding
- Community support/friendship
- Joy in the face of adversity

These points connect my children's book to my story, but also allow the book to be relevant to all students experiencing natural disaster. The themes identified also function as resilience factors, allowing art teachers to use this curriculum resource to build resilience in their students.

Through the content analysis, I identified a few elements that I included in my book:

- Resiliency prompts, questions, and activities integrated into the text, and offered at the end of the book
- Connection to and reverence for nature
- Whimsical language and collaged art style

Conclusion

The full children's book consists of 13 illustrations and one page of resilience building questions and art making prompts. I based the plot of the story on the memory of my favorite stuffed animal avoiding the flood waters of Katrina by floating up above the water on my mattress. This story presented the perfect structure for a story about perseverance, survival, joy, and home. I chose to illustrate my book with a painted paper collage motif, with most inspiration from Eric Carle, Lois Ehlert, Leo Lionni, and Aura Cherrybag.

The project found the factors key to building resilience during my experience of Katrina and created a resource for teachers to promote similar resilience in their students. The process gave closure and purpose to the hurricane that has haunted me for most of my life. The resulting book is a productive way to help others who are living through a disaster, and I intend to publish the book so that it may be a resource for teachers everywhere.

Acknowledgments

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References


Notes from content analysis. Each book was read several times to get a holistic understanding of its characteristics and meaning.