In Pursuit of Meaning:
Exploring the language of critical and creative thinking

Fiona Maine, Bath Spa University, UK
Research Questions

- How do children make meaning from text?
- What parts do critical and creative thinking processes play in this?
- Is this evident in discussions that children have about texts that they encounter?
Design

- A series of video vignettes where pairs of children discuss a text
- Texts: written, visual, filmic
- Context: Children and text, not within ‘classroom’ but within school context
- Prompts: ‘What do you think this text is about? What questions do you have about it?’
Critical and Creative Thinking

- **Creative Thinking:**
  ‘possibility thinking’ (Craft 2000)

- **Critical Thinking:**
  ‘Reasonable reflective thinking that is focussed on deciding what to believe or do’ (Ennis 1987: 10)
A special kind of problem solving?

Creative thinking as divergent thinking?
Critical thinking as convergent thinking?
The language of thinking

Is the difference between creative and critical language clear?

- Critical thinking language: rationalising reasoning (well..., because, I think)
- Creative thinking: exploring, thinking of possibilities (might, could maybe)
H They’re hotels? What makes you think they are hotels?
B Because some people have stopped to go...
H Yes.. There’s door leading into it
B Well, the door... cos they’re big, the door might go down there, down there, down to the bottom
H But.. I wonder if they are going up or down? That’s a question isn’t it?
B [Hmm]
H Because they’re going down on... they look like..
B [Cos cos they’re on the floor]
H ...I know, but they might have been taking off.......and how are they getting up there?

B yeah .. or....or they might have jumped out of a helicopter (unclear)

H I know....how can an aeroplane or a helicopter hold so many people in it?

B Well...there could be one, one, one, one (gestures)... it could be like...

H there could be ten of them

B ..and then they’d set out of another ten.. and ...another ten and another ten and another ten...
Is it critical thinking as it is seeking meaning (a convergent purpose)?

Or does the creative (divergent) thinking aid the critical by giving a possible solutions to a problem in making meaning?