



FARMINGTON INSTITUTE
HARRIS MANCHESTER COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Farmington Report

Assessing the Impact of The Story Project across 20 Primary Schools in Surrey 2020-2021

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Introduction: I Am A Story

I will start this report by encouraging you to read a children's book called *I am a Story* by Dan Yaccarino. It is written in the first person from the perspective of 'stories' and recalls their history from: '*I was told around campfires then painted on cave walls*', running through how stories have evolved, but have consistently evoked a range of feelings and have '*inspired millions*'.

This simple picture book highlights the influence that stories have on our lives, they are part of our history and the way that humans have always made sense of the world. My own copy of 'I am a Story' has its own tale to tell, I bought it from the Harvard Bookstore in 2016, when I was visiting Massachusetts as part of my Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship. I had received the fellowship in order to complete research into the ways that reading and writing can improve children and young people's mental health. I was specifically visiting Massachusetts so I could take part in a reading programme at Lowell and Lynne County Court, where females who had been found guilty of petty crimes had been sentenced to a reading programme. I was able to witness the power of stories to change lives as these women connected and supported each other through discussing and dissecting the text *Sula* by Toni Morrison.

When I came out of that session, I felt the power of stories more than ever, so when I saw Dan Yaccarino's book, it called to me and I have felt compelled to share its message and to delve deeper into the importance of stories ever since. This in turn led me to create 'The Story Project' and the purpose of this Farmington Scholarship is to review The Story Project and how it has impacted wellbeing across 20 schools in Surrey.

What is The Story Project?

The Story Project (TSP) trains and provides teachers with resources that enable them to use stories to teach children wellbeing skills. In this context, the wellbeing skills taught have been chosen based on Government statutory requirements for Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), advice from the PSHE association and insights from the Centre for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning. The wellbeing skills used in TSP are outlined in a wellbeing progression of skills for year R-6 that covers six different areas: These are: physical, social, mental and emotional, environmental, economic and spiritual wellbeing.

These wellbeing skills are matched with six age-appropriate stories (in the form of popular picture/ chapter books) per year group. This means the year group will focus on one book per half term and each book has been chosen because it covers 5 different wellbeing objectives. This means the teacher can use the story to explore one objective per week. On the website www.story-project.co.uk teachers can access lesson plans that accompany each objective. These plans follow a unique structure using the acronym STORY, which stands for:

Settle: Each lesson starts with a guided relaxation exercise that is linked to the chosen fictional text. This provides children with the opportunity to focus their minds ready for learning.

Training: Then teachers are encouraged to spend time training children in the key emotional and wellbeing vocabulary in the text. This involves looking at expressions in pictures and short phrases from the text to build an understanding of how emotions look and feel.

Objective: Each lesson is based around a specific wellbeing objective from the curriculum, so at this stage in the lesson teachers need to check that children understand and are focused on the wellbeing objective. This ensures that children read the book through a specific wellbeing lens. Therefore, even if the book has not been specifically written to hit the chosen objective, the children still know what they should be looking out for.

Read: Now the teacher will read the story to the class and ask children the pre-prepared questions related to the characters wellbeing. Children can safely discuss this as a class, because they do not have to talk about their personal experiences instead, they can explore topics whilst focused on a character.

You: The lesson finishes by allowing children to individually apply what they have learnt from the wellbeing of the characters to themselves. This leads to a greater connection to and enjoyment of the texts and a better understanding of the wellbeing objective.

The Context of Wellbeing in Schools

2020 marked a monumental shift for advocates of teaching wellbeing skills, as the subject RSHE, which includes many wellbeing objectives, was made statutory. The timing of this change is particularly relevant, as, although not planned it has coincided with the greatest challenge that has faced the young people of this generation, viz. the Covid19 pandemic: During the pandemic, the challenges of lockdowns, bereavements, family financial difficulties, loss of education and social opportunities have led to a decline in children's mental health reinforcing the rationale for teaching the subject. As schools decipher the best way to teach RSHE and wellbeing, the purpose of my Farmington Scholarship has been to look into the benefits of using TSP to teach these skills.

This report will explore TSP's approach and will delve into the literary, philosophical and educational theory that backs its methodology. This theory will be accompanied by research in action as I will analyse my own experience and the experiences of teachers across 20 local schools as we use TSP to improve wellbeing. As the resources are based around stories, there is also an opportunity during these lessons to help reinforce children's literacy skills, so this report will also highlight any impact noticed in this area too.

About the Schools Taking Part

The schools taking part in the study found out about The Story Project through a variety of presentations delivered at Literacy Lead and PSHE Lead network meetings in Surrey. The 20 schools are varied in terms of their intake and size, with the smallest cohort being a school of 50 pupils and the biggest cohort a school of 650 pupils. All the schools are primary schools, with a few being infant only or junior only schools. This report will give examples from a wide range of schools and will look at trends that apply to the majority of schools that are taking part. It will not explore the experiences of individual schools and compare their experiences based upon their different cohorts. This is an area for potential future research.

As the resources have a dual focus of wellbeing and literacy, the schools have all made personal decisions about where TSP learning time will fit into their school day, with 55% teaching these resources within PSHE lessons, 31% of schools teaching these resources as a discreet lesson on their own and the rest of schools using them as a part of guided reading or a mixture of the three options.

Research Methodology

To understand the experiences of the teachers across these schools, I appointed a Story Project Lead Teacher at these schools who I kept in regular contact with and they gave the qualitative feedback included in this report. I also sent out a survey at the end of the year for all the teachers at each of the schools to provide quantitative and qualitative summative feedback on The Story Project.

Why Use Stories?

The use of stories to teach wellbeing skills is not a new concept as Pulimeno et al (2020), succinctly explain:

‘Since ancient times, myths, legends, fables and fairytales have supported individuals to understand who they are as human beings and the world around them, allowing people to map the reality through the use of words and language.’

Stories provide children with a safe place to explore their experiences of growing up and to learn about others. Oatley (1999) refers to stories as a ‘laboratory space, that, relative to real life, is safe and can make the relations of emotions to goals and action easier to understand.’

Extending the metaphor of story as a laboratory space allows us to view children as the scientists carrying out their daily life experiments. Having stories to give examples and provide fertile research for their experiments, means that children are less likely to have the social equivalent of a bunsen burner explosion. Children have the chance to think social situations through in the ‘story laboratory’ before they have to manage them in real life. Children can place characters experiences under the microscope so they can keep a safe distance from difficult topics of discussion.

Gibbs et al (1994), clarify that:

‘stories – by reproducing fictional situations that match with children’s real problems – allow them to feel comfortable and safe in difficult circumstances, ensuring emotional security and providing healthier ways to deal with internal struggles, life adversities and stressors. Story-tales compensate what young people may lack, by presenting them positive patterns of behaviours and constructive models through the characters they could identify with.’

This has been evident when using TSP to teach sensitive subjects such as:

- I understand that some marriages may break down and lead to a divorce and I am aware of some reasons for this.
- I am aware of some of the feelings associated with divorce
- I have some strategies for dealing with these types of feelings.

These are objectives covered in year 5 and help children to understand the complex nature of divorce and separation. Approximately 42% of marriages end in divorce and half of these involve children (Relate, 2014), so it is a topic that will affect many children in our classrooms, but can be sensitive to talk about. TSP uses the book *Mum and Dad Glue* by Kes Grey to approach this topic. One teacher taking part in the pilot, explained that he had a number of children in his class whose families were experiencing divorce when he

started the lessons based on this book. At first, he was unsure how the class would respond, but he made it very clear at the start of the topic that the conversations would be based around the character in the book, so no-one needed to divulge their own personal experiences if they don't want to. This led to a relaxed atmosphere and a space for rich discussion. He even found that one of his pupils who doesn't usually like reading, started to ask enthusiastically when the next Story Project lesson would be. Through the 'laboratory space' this teacher has created; his class have been able to navigate a difficult subject with more ease and even enjoyment as they have become connected to the characters experiences. Overall, 90% of the teachers taking part in the project have seen an increase in engagement in PSHE, suggesting that using stories is an engaging way to teach this subject.

Shared Laboratory Space

Using stories as a 'Laboratory space', also gave children more opportunities to work collaboratively and learn from each other. As they were able to talk freely in a safe space, they had the opportunity to hear other people's opinions on an issue. In my own year 3 class we were exploring the character's feeling of disappointment in '*On a Magical Do Nothing Day*' by Beatrice Allemagne. We talked about what were appropriate and inappropriate ways to react when we are experiencing disappointment. The conversation veered to whether crying was an appropriate reaction to feeling disappointed. We had a class vote and the results were 50/50 as to whether it was appropriate. One child who thought it was appropriate said that 'crying lets out all your bad thoughts and feelings' and another child who thought it wasn't appropriate explained 'that if you just keep crying then you'll make yourself feel worse'. We came to a class consensus that it is ok to cry and it can be helpful to release our feelings, but if we keep crying then we might need to speak to someone and get some help. I often think about the laboratory work that was happening during those exchanges: Through the collective experimentation and conclusion that crying is acceptable, the children have been exposed to a healthier approach to managing feelings. Meaning that when a real life situation occurs they will have this experience to refer to.

Another child in a TSP class who has benefitted from this model is Sophie. Sophie struggled with her emotions and had done a lot of 1-1 work to learn skills to help her express and recognize emotions. She made some progress 1-1 but was often distracted and could misinterpret emotions in the sessions. When she started TSP classes her teacher noticed her emotional vocabulary and understanding developed more through hearing her classmates discuss emotions and having the shared space to develop these skills. Her Learning Support Assistant remarked that: '...last year she really struggled to regulate her emotions when a holiday was approaching, but she was never able to articulate this so would demonstrate her distress through her misbehaviour, so I was surprised when during a Story Project lesson related to the book *Ruby's Worry* by Tom Percival, Sophie put her hand up to share that she was feeling worried because she would miss everyone during the half term that was coming up.' Sophie had been able to process the characters experience and had benefitted from hearing peers interpret Ruby's worry. This had led her towards a healthier way to manage her feelings.

The Event

The outcomes in the above situations are linked to the wellbeing objectives being taught, but they are also the result of genuine questioning and discussion that is invoked by the laboratory space. In hermeneutical research this genuine questioning leads to an 'event' of healing being brought about through the conversation. This 'event' is something that is hard to measure but could be described as being at the heart of education. It is the moment that sticks with a learner but may not be memorable at the time. The moment that an adult years later talks about happening in class that the teacher has long forgotten. Caputo (2018) suggests, 'Maybe the very best teachers are the ones who set off quiet and unobserved revolutions that no one noticed at the time and that no-one can remember later.' We have to really search for the 'event' to notice it happening and it is not something we can easily measure but can be very valuable. Perhaps in the situations above an 'event' had occurred.

Building interpretation skills/ critical thinking

To encourage children to have an 'event' in a lesson, there needs to be space and encouragement for children to interpret the texts in their own ways and to think about the texts critically. For example, in TSP curricula, the lessons are created so that children critically explore the characters wellbeing from a variety of perspectives. In the book '*On a Magical Do Nothing Day*' by Beatrice Allemagne, the main character is in a cabin in the woods with their mum. The mum has to work, and the child is bored and playing computer games. Then the child drops their game in a puddle and has to entertain themselves which leads to an exciting adventure in nature. The first wellbeing objective TSP covers is 'I understand how being in nature benefits my wellbeing.' This is a big theme in the book and starts lots of wonderful conversations about nature.

Rather than stop the conversation there, TSP looks at the story from 4 other wellbeing perspectives:

I understand that all living things have rights and that everyone has a responsibility to respect those rights.

I understand how to have a balance between online games and other hobbies

I understand the basic rules of keeping safe outside.

I understand the feeling disappointment and how to deal with this.

This requires the children to look into the story in more depth and really consider the wellbeing of the character. Regarding the objective 'I understand the basic rules of keeping safe outside' the children have to consider that although the character is having a lovely time in nature, they are by themselves around water and far away from an adult. Through looking at the story through the lens of this objective they were able to identify a lot more risks that the character was under and think about how they can be mitigated.

When later in the year we read '*Ruby's Worry*' by Tom Percival, the children demonstrated using this skill without being prompted. The main objective related to this book was for children to speak to someone about their worries, but the children all commented that Ruby should be more careful as she chose to share her worries with a stranger she met in the park. Rather than accept the main message of the story, the children have critically evaluated the characters wellbeing from a variety of perspectives.

In a conference held in January 2021 by the Westminster Education Forum, Will Gardener the CEO of *Childnet* and Director of the *UK Safer Internet Council* reiterated that the best thing educators can do to help children navigate the changing digital world is to develop critical thinking and strategy building with them. We don't know the exact situations that children will end up in that might threaten their wellbeing but we can help children to have the thinking skills to be able to mitigate the risks in any situation. Caputo (2018) summarises that we need 'carefully calculated curricula that leaves space for the incalculable.'

Overall, 73% of teachers who used The Story Project felt that the resources had a positive impact on children's critical thinking skills.

Having a familiar structure

Gadamer (2004) explains that 'we integrate something unfamiliar into our familiar ways of seeing things.' In this respect, as TSP lessons are asking children to develop new skills and ways of thinking, it is helpful for there also to be some familiar aspects to the lessons. For this reason, at my school each lesson starts with a picture of the 'Wellbeing Tree', a symbol in our school that encompasses the 6 different aspects of wellbeing. I ask children to remind me what wellbeing means and we have a simple definition of 'being happy and healthy'. This helps remind children of what they are learning and is easier to understand than referring to the subject by the official titles of PSHE and RSHE. These stand respectively for 'personal, social, health and economic education' and 'relationships, sex and health education', which are quite confusing to continuously explain and make it harder for children to relate to what they are learning.

As well as having a familiar image at the start of the lesson, each TSP lesson is broken down into the STORY structure. The first part of each lesson is a settling activity. The settling activity is also repeated over 5 lessons so that children have the chance to get used to it and they begin to request it. Our latest book in year 3 has been '*I will not EVER never eat a tomato*', by Lauren Child. Our settling activity has been to eat a piece of fruit or vegetable mindfully. As a class we have tried lots of different fruits and vegetables, and the children are keen to ask what we will be tasting every week. This familiar structure places the children at ease and ready to learn.

Giving children specific instruction to go with the stories

The second stage of the lesson is 'training' and this element allows for more specific emotional vocabulary instruction. It is well known that before children can be expected to express and regulate their emotions they need a varied emotional vocabulary. (Denham, 1986)

At the start of the academic year I asked children to write down how they thought a girl in a picture was feeling and why they thought this. Here are three examples (sic):

1. She is hapee. I fic that she exsited.
2. I feel she is happy because she has a smile on her fase. And she looks comfertibel.
3. Happy because she is playing a game and I like doing that and she looks combfertbol.

Nearing the end of the academic year, I have asked children to repeat this activity with a different picture, and here are the same three children's answers:

1. I think she is feeling worried and lonely because her head is looking down because other people are making fun of her and she's alone and sad.
2. I think she is feeling left out, hesitant, nervous, furious and judgemental because she has her head down pointing at the floor.
3. I think the girl is sad. She is feeling this way because people were mean to her. I know she is sad because her head is droopy, she looks rejected and left out.

The improvement in emotional vocabulary has come from spending time in the training section of each TSP lesson exploring the pictures in the story and how they demonstrate the characters emotions. We discuss how we can tell what the characters are feeling, and why we think they might be feeling that way. This is helping to develop inference as a reading skill, but also encourages children to expand their emotional understanding. Each lesson children are given a grid with pictures linked to emotional vocabulary and children refer to this while they look at a picture of the characters. Having the grid available means children are more likely to take risks and use new vocabulary. In lessons children ask: 'What does this emotion word mean- this emotion word looks like the picture of the character.' This opens a natural discussion around the new emotion word.

One teacher at a participating school commented that 'we have emotional vocabulary as one of our teaching objectives but it is easy to miss this in the usual school routine, since using TSP we now have this structured into the lesson and revisited every week and it has been interesting to see how this has led to their emotional vocabulary developing. They are suddenly using words that aren't 'happy' and 'sad', and this has fed into their writing which has been really positive. To have this structure of regularly looking at these things has been really positive as it definitely happens then.'

Another teacher commented that they were really surprised at the children's lack of ability to read emotions and they only became aware of this through doing this activity regularly in TSP lessons.

Overall, 90% of teachers who took part saw an improvement in children's emotional vocabulary and 90% felt this had led to improvement in children's ability to manage their emotions.

Practical wisdom

After discussing the characters' emotions with my own class for a few weeks, one of the children asked if they could check in their own emotions each week on the emotional grid. In this scenario a child is showing a desire to apply what they are learning to their own lives.

Aristotle claimed that 'phronesis' – 'practical virtue' demanded experience to really understand something 'and Dilthey, too, commented that a 'firm ground for human knowledge is life experience itself'. Although TSP aims to provide children with characters experiences as the laboratory space for learning how to manage their own life experiences, it is noted that the lessons are more successful when children have the opportunity to apply the skills they have learnt in their own world. This can be encouraged by the teacher, for example with a personal emotional check in alongside learning about the characters emotions. One school has created a wellbeing check in for each of their classes with age appropriate emotions on the wall starting with characters such as 'cranky croc' for reception and leading up to checking in with a colour in older years.

As most of the social skills children are developing will happen in the playground the children need the opportunity to relate what they are learning to situations as they happen. Successful examples of this are when children have been asked to reflect on a behaviour incident that has happened on the playground using the same emotional vocabulary they have been learning.

Other examples are child-led such as in a year 2 class where a teacher has been reading the book '*The Girl who Never Made Mistakes*' by Mark Pett. The book tells the story of a perfectionist girl who finally has a lot of fun and relaxes after making a mistake. The children in year two asked their teacher to read the book multiple times and would refer to it when they made a mistake in different lessons: 'I just made a mistake like Beatrice and that's ok', children would tell each other. The teachers in that year group have encouraged this by making a big display related to the book at the entrance to the classroom so children have a chance to remember that making mistakes is 'OK' every time they enter the classroom.

In my year 3 class we have been reading Child's *I will not EVER never eat a tomato*, we were looking at habits and finding ways to remind ourselves to keep up good habits. One girl had decided to draw a picture of a very tidy bedroom with a picture of herself looking very chilled out in front of it. She asked if I could photocopy the picture so she could stick it on her bedroom wall. This led to a clamour of children wanting to photocopy their habit reminders so they could use them at home.

Gadamer refers to these situations as 'the play of conversation' and Derrida calls them 'undecidability' (both quoted in Caputo, 2018): The teachers have set up a situation for learning but the children have put it into action. It is hard to tell who has led the knowledge instead it is about the teacher allowing the children to have an equal say in how they learn and how they will put the knowledge into practice.

Importance of Teacher Training

These examples show the importance of the teacher giving opportunities for the child to lead in applying their own knowledge, but it is the teacher, as always, who is the orchestrator of how successful this learning will be. Hattie (2018) found, the most important factor in any learning intervention being successful is the teacher's belief in their ability to make a difference.

Therefore, one of the most important aspects of insuring that children get the most out of TSP is making sure teachers receive adequate and inspirational training. After training, 100% of teachers responded that they felt more confident teaching children wellbeing and 70% of teachers used the word 'inspiring' to describe the training. To create the right mix of informative and inspiring the training contains a mixture of personal experience, anecdotes, research and specific guidance.

I delivered training directly at half of the schools who took part in this study. At the other half the teachers were trained by a lead teacher from their school who I delivered training to as part of a train the trainer model. There have been *pros* and *cons* of both methods. The teachers who I delivered training directly to had the ability to ask me questions directly, but the lead teachers were able to tailor their training directly to the needs of their school.

As with any PSHE/ RSHE lessons, the guidance is that teachers should teach these lessons to their own students. This generally works better because the teachers know their students well. This is important because as Derrida (trans by Quantaince 2002) says when sharing knowledge we need to remember that 'Each case is other, each decision is different and requires an absolutely unique interpretation. 'a new case'. Although the lesson plans are well structured and easy to deliver, each class and each child will react to them differently. This was the experience of a year two teacher who delivered a lesson related to reflection. After learning about how there is no such a thing as a good or bad person, only good or bad choices, children had a chance to reflect on the choices they had made that week and to decide whether they could do anything differently. One child who had been struggling with his emotions and had a difficult home situation found this lesson really challenging. He spent some time declaring that he was really bad. As the adults in the class knew this child really well, they gave him some time out and then made a plan to support his self-esteem. Although the child had reacted badly in this particular lesson, it was positive that he had felt able to tell his teachers that this is how he is feeling and the content of the discussion had led to the teachers knowing what type of support he needs.

The content of TSP lessons and any PSHE/ wellbeing lessons can occasionally lead to children having a challenging reaction or disclosing information. Therefore, it is essential that all staff delivering the project have appropriate safeguarding training. It is also worth noting that Story Project lessons are not therapy. Hence, when tricky personal situations come up for children, it is important that the teacher and child know where to get extra support or advice. For example, the child in the above example is also receiving support from a school Emotional Literacy Support Assistant. TSP plays a part within a much bigger picture of schools supporting children's wellbeing.

As well as knowing when to get further support for a child, it has been noted that sometimes children may want to delve further into a topic than TSP resources cover. For example in year six there is a lot of content covered and a teacher mentioned that some of the children wanted to look into topics in more depth. To do this, I have suggested some follow-on reading material for older year groups and some ideas for writing/ research projects to accompany the resources.

Summary of Research

Throughout this report, I have presented the key themes and topics that have arisen for the teachers and children who have taken part in the project. As well as providing ongoing feedback throughout the year, the teachers provided some very enlightening summative feedback at the end of the year with their perspectives on the strengths of the project and areas where it could develop.

Here are the perspectives of three important stakeholders in TSP:

*"My reception class have absolutely adored the texts. They have remembered all of the characters they've met through the emotions/stories linked to them. They love our SP display board and we make links to key words frequently. They are fully engaged in the range of activities linked to each week. We use our visual emotions chart which has really helped with their vocabulary. **We all love it!**"- Primary School Teacher*

*"My son always talks about his Story Project lessons, **he loves them!** He struggles to engage with most subjects at school because he is very hyperactive, but these lessons really capture his attention. During the lockdown when you were delivering the lessons*

online, we would do them together and I learnt lots of tips too to manage my covid stress! I am so happy you cover these subjects at school.”- Parent

“Stories make learning about wellbeing easier and more fun!”- Year 3 child

At the end of the year, I also surveyed teachers on whether they thought TSP had a positive impact in relevant areas:

90% have seen a positive improvement in children’s wellbeing

90% have seen a positive improvement in children’s emotional vocabulary.

90% have seen a positive improvement in children’s ability to manage their emotions.

80% have seen a positive improvement in children’s behaviour.

73% have seen a positive improvement in children’s critical thinking skills.

76% have seen a positive improvement in children’s academic literacy.

90% have seen a positive improvement in engagement in PSHE

100% would recommend The Story Project

100% will use The Story Project next year

Future Plans

Due to the positive response to TSP during this academic year, I am currently working on making the resources and training available to a wider range of schools next year. I am improving the range of resources to take into account the feedback from teachers and children this year. I am also in the process of developing TSP resources for pre-school children to help them develop the wellbeing skills they need before they start school and developing TSP resources for secondary age children. Any teachers, parents or educators who would like to find out more about how they can engage their school in TSP, please do get in contact via our website www.story-project.co.uk.

Further Research

Another exciting development from my Farmington Scholarship is that the experience has inspired me to continue my research at St Mary’s, and I am currently in the process of developing a further research proposal to ensure TSP remains based in research and I can continue to learn more about the fascinating world of stories and wellbeing.

Acknowledgements

I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to Sir Ralph Waller and The Farmington Institute for making this research project possible. It has added depth, rigour and prestige to my work and provided me with endless support. It has also introduced me to Professor

Anthony Towey at St Mary's University, who I cannot thank enough for his helpful guidance, enthusiasm and for introducing me to a whole new avenue for exploring my work. I look forward to continuing my research journey with you and the other inspiring academics you have introduced me to.

Finally, I would like to thank my school, St Paul's C of E Primary School for encouraging and supporting this opportunity to take part in a Farmington Scholarship. I would also like to offer my appreciation to the teachers and children who have brought TSP to life across the schools who have taken part in the project. All the teachers I have worked with go above and beyond to support their children's wellbeing every day and have shown passionate commitment to the project during this unprecedented year. I look forward to continuing to work with you and to use your valuable feedback to make TSP stronger. To all the children who have taken part in TSP lessons, especially the children I have taught at St Paul's Primary School, thank you for your enthusiasm and I can't wait to see how you will use your wellbeing skills to flourish in the years to come.

Final Thought from John Steinbeck

"In every bit of honest writing in the world there is a base theme. Try to understand men, if you understand each other, you will be kind to each other. Knowing a man well never leads to hate and nearly always leads to love. There are shorter means, many of them. There is writing promoting social change, writing punishing injustice, writing in celebration of heroism, but always that base theme. Try to understand each other." -John Steinbeck in his 1938 journal.

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