

FROM READERS TO TEACHERS

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Abstract

What is the difference between reading a literary text for pleasure, and reading it in order to teach it? This study explores the change in the experiences of 27 prospective literature teachers from when they read and respond to a story per se to when they read it with their future classes in mind. The teachers were asked to answer two questions concerning a story: (1) Do you find it good? and (2) Would you teach it? Their answers were analysed, and a considerable difference was found in both the criteria and in the language the respondents used. Their emphasis shifted from the sense of pleasure to the issue of relevance to the students; from the story's beauty to the literary devices that it used. They also elaborated more on the ethical aspects of the text, and began thinking about how to teach it. We conclude by recommending that, to avoid the pitfalls involved in the move from recreational to pedagogical reading, the dilemmas concerning the appreciation and selection of literary texts should be discussed with prospective teachers.

Keywords: teacher education, teaching literature, text appreciation

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher educators seek to evoke thinking about teaching and learning processes. In this paper, we discuss the dual approach of prospective teachers to literature and its instruction. Prospective literature teachers have reading experience – many have read literature for pleasure, and all have done so during their studies. They appreciate literature, have professional skills to approach a literary text, and can express a learned opinion about it. Since they are about to become teachers, they should also begin thinking which texts are appropriate for their future students, and this requires a change in approach. It is important to understand what happens when teachers begin teaching, to be aware of this change, and to address it in teacher education programs. This is especially relevant in the Israeli context, where the curriculum and methods of instruction are heavily influenced by the matriculation exams at the end of high school.

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In this study, we looked into what changes between the first reading, which we will call 'recreational reading', and the second - 'pedagogical reading', when asked to consider the suitability of the story for teaching. We explored the way prospective teachers evaluated the text, the criteria they chose, the language they used, and their overall attitude. Better understanding of the difference between the two readings will shed light on prospective teachers' thinking and help teacher educators prepare them to become literature teachers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Responding to literature*

When asked to read a story critically and evaluate it, readers offer various explanations. They may base their opinion on personal taste or describe their emotional response. Their opinions and responses may be interpreted as a reflection of their social and personal identity, based on their experiences, worldviews (Fish, 1980) and psychological reasoning (Holland, 1975). Reader response theories are the most relevant for this kind of expression.

They may also refer to poetic and literary aesthetic aspects of the text, its language, structure, and literary devices. The relevant theoretical background for this kind of reading is the New Criticism, with its emphasis on close reading and a search for unity of form and content (Brooks, 1947).

Finally, readers may offer an ethical reading of the text, examining its values, its morality, its treatment of various social groups, or its political stand. The long tradition of ethical readings starts with Horace's *dulce et utile* and lives on in the critical theories that interpret literature in its social context, such as neo-Marxism, feminism, and cultural studies - which have played a central role since the 1960's (Eagleton, 1984).

These criteria will guide us in analysing the participants' responses to the text. We will also take the context of their reading into consideration. People read differently in different circumstances, in different stages of their education, and in different professional positions (Vipond et al., 1990). Specifically, they read 'as teachers' when they need to decide whether to teach a certain text, and this issue is the focus of the paper.

2.2 *Text selection*

When selecting a text, teachers bring a variety of considerations to bear, including personal taste, abilities, and resources. This selection is based on a range of specific characteristics of the text, such as length and context, but at the same time, it is "perhaps more of an art than a science" (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018, p. 97). Research showed that teachers mentioned the need to have effortless access to the text (Agee, 2000; Friese et al., 2008; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015); preferred works with

which they were familiar; or chose those they liked or had enjoyed as students (Agee, 2009; Grossman, 1990; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015).

Teachers also based their consideration on the teaching context and school setting (Agee, 2000; McGann et al., 2001), preferring texts required by the school and/or state curriculum (Friese et al., 2008; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). Teachers selected literary works according to their literary value, their formal qualities and the historical context (McGann et al., 2001); and for being part of the canon and socio-cultural consensus (Agee, 2000; Hirsch, 1999). Others recommended works that could be used to develop language (Friese et al., 2008) or theoretical ideas (McGann et al., 2001).

Finally, teachers chose works according to their students' competence (Agee, 2009; Grossman, 1990; McGann et al., 2001); their needs, interests and fascination (Agee, 2000; Bertschi-Kaufmann & Graber, 2017; Davies, Doecke & Mead, 2013; Friese et al., 2008; Gibbons, Dail & Stallworth, 2006; Grossman, 1990; Guthrie, Wigfield & You, 2012; Hazlett & Sweeney, 2017). On the other hand, teachers felt it was important that literature would not only be relevant, but also offer students alternative perspectives (Agee, 2000). Therefore, some suggested multicultural texts (Agee, 2009; Davies, Doecke & Mead, 2013). Others recommend teaching classical texts, believing that despite their alleged irrelevance, they were valuable for expanding language skills (Stotsky, Traffas & Woodworth, 2010). These diverse and often contradictory findings indicate the complexity of the issue.

2.3 From reading to teaching

What happens in the transition from reader to teacher, from recreational to pedagogical reading? Lee Shulman (1987) coined the term 'pedagogical content knowledge' to describe the process by which teachers turn their subject matter knowledge into practical teaching in a classroom. Shulman describes Nancy, a skilled teacher who possessed 'a mental index for these books she had taught so often... with key episodes organized in her mind for different pedagogical purposes' (p. 20). Other scholars pointed to the pitfalls in the shift. Don Zancanella (1991) compared the personal approaches to literature of five junior high school teachers to their teaching of literature. Adopting Shulman's terminology, he claimed that the "school version" of literature (p. 27) is an obstruction to the process of transforming content knowledge into pedagogical content knowledge. He described the mixing of the personal and the conventional school approach as a troubled process, and wrote that despite the personal differences, the basic literature teaching procedures of all five teachers focused on comprehension and literary terms.

While Zancanella (1991) focused on experienced teachers, Jane Agee (1997, 1998) studied prospective teachers, and showed that the change they undergo is problematic even before they face the school's institutional constraints. For her participants, 'Reading like teachers' meant 'dissecting literature, searching for "hidden things", and transmitting them for the students' (1998, p. 97). Agee claimed that the

transformation of the prospective teachers' experiences as readers and students of literature into effective pedagogical content knowledge was difficult to achieve. Others have also shown that teachers' experience as students affects their beliefs about teaching and learning and consequently their classroom decision-making (e.g. Fang, 1996; Meidle, 2013; Meirink et al., 2009; Wallace & Priestley, 2011).

Whether we accept Shulman's view of the process of turning content knowledge to pedagogical content knowledge as a positive shift, or Zancanella and Agee's reservations about it, it is clear that the change is inevitable. Literature teachers cannot remain recreational readers when they think pedagogically. In what follows, we examine the change in the criteria and in the language prospective teachers used when they shifted from one reading to another. Our objectives were:

- 1) To examine the criteria and language prospective literature teachers use in appreciating a short story.
- 2) To examine the criteria and language that prospective literature teachers use while considering the appropriateness of a short story for teaching.
- 3) To compare the criteria and language of recreational and pedagogical reading, and understand the nature of the shift from one to the other.

3. METHOD

This qualitative study applies a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994).

3.1 *Participants*

Twenty-seven students (25 women and two men, aged 24-35, average age 28), enrolled in three consecutive method courses on teaching literature at the secondary level (a required course in the teacher education program at the university) participated in our study. The course requires prospective teachers to learn how to teach the subject matter in two weekly academic hours during two academic years. They learn the national curriculum, discuss recommended works, and engage in diverse ways of teaching texts to achieve the curriculum goals. They must also experience supervised weekly school teaching.

One of the participants' assignments in the second year was to write their impressions of an unseen story and assess its suitability for teaching. Given their accumulated teaching experience, by the time they weighted the suitability of a given work for teaching, presumably they retained their own experiences both as students (Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992) and as student teachers.

3.2 *Procedure*

The participants were asked to read carefully the short story 'Chocolate' by Reuven Miran (1996) (see Appendix), and answer the following questions referring to

recreational and pedagogical reading, respectively: (a) What did you think about the story, is it a good story? (b) Do you consider 'Chocolate' a story worth teaching? Please elaborate. Participants worked individually and submitted their papers to the course lecturer.

The story describes a child in pre-Soviet Russia who on his way home from school passes daily by a chocolate factory, relishing the smell of chocolate only rich people can afford. Following a long descriptive passage that stimulates all senses and pictures the moment of inhaling the smell, the narrator jumps years ahead and reveals that the child was his grandfather. Until the day he died, the grandfather used to put a piece of chocolate on the narrator's pillow, while wishing him good night.

We found the story suitable for our study because it is very short, moderately complicated, rich in poetic devices, beautiful in its language and interesting in its plot. In addition, due to the sparse information it offers, the story invites the reader to actively fill in the information gaps (Iser, 1978) between the first part of the story and the surprising ending. In Roland Barthes' (1974) terms, this is a 'writerly' text that enables more than one entrance and more than one net of relations. One can begin with the story's poetics: plot structure, usage of time, ways of depiction, use of senses, colours, etc. A different reading will focus on the main character, his motives, relations with others and personal growth. Yet another may begin with the symbolic role of chocolate as representing the social forces underlying the story.

3.3 Data analysis

The participants' responses were content-analysed. The unit of analysis was a statement expressing an idea, whether in one short sentence or an elaborate and multi-sentence text. In analysing the text, both authors relied on their experience as literature teachers.

First, we read all the responses together and made notes about recurring ideas or concepts, marking statements or words we thought deserved further consideration. Next, each author individually analysed ten randomly chosen responses grouping the statements under main categories. Then we compared our analyses and discussed our inferences in order to reach consensus. In this mutual discussion, we also broke each category down to subcategories. We then repeated the process with ten additional randomly selected responses, applying the complete set of criteria and sub-criteria to them until we attained an 85% consensus rate. We found four main categories of considerations: reader response, aesthetic considerations, ethical, and school context considerations. Comments that did not present clear considerations were marked as "other" (see Table 1). Finally, we turned to a close reading of the responses as a whole, to study the language the participants used, focusing on their choice of words, syntax, order, repetitions, and tone.

3.4 Ethics

The task was given as a course assignment. To avoid bias related to authority relations, students were approached only after receiving their final grades and were asked for their written consent to use their work as a research data.

4. FINDINGS

Table 1. Number of respondents and statements in the two readings

Categories	Recreational Reading				Pedagogical Reading			
	Respondents N=27		Statements		Respondents N=27		Statements	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reader response	27	100	157	32	25	93	83	30
Aesthetic	26	96	206	43	24	89	58	21
Ethical	20	74	60	13	23	85	72	26
School context	—	—	—	—	22	81	47	16
Other	17	63	55	12	12	44	19	7
Total	—	—	478	100	—	—	279	100

Table I shows the participants' considerations. Analysis of the language participants used to explain themselves revealed four major phenomena (or combinations thereof) in the transformation from recreational to pedagogical reading: (1) from pleasure to relevance; (2) from literary beauty to literary devices; (3) from what the story is about to what it teaches us; and (4) from reading to teaching.

4.1 From pleasure to relevance

The most dominant criteria in the prospective teachers' response in both readings concerned the reading experience and the emotions it evoked, identification with the characters, and so forth. In relation to recreational reading, all 27 participants referred in one way or another to their feelings, and there were 157 statements which expressed their like or dislike of the work. Sometimes they wrote briefly: 'The work is exciting and enjoyable'. At other times, they elaborated; for example,

I enjoyed reading the story 'Chocolate'; it has a strong smell of chocolate and a positive memory of the narrator's grandfather. [...] I could really feel myself standing there, in the cold, next to this boy, freezing and itchy from the scarf, but still enjoying the famous smell.

The negative responses referred to the story's failure to evoke feelings. For instance, 'The characters did not touch me, emotionally, and I did not enjoy reading the work', or, 'I could not fully connect to the characters or to the plot. For me, the plot blocked the reader, and did not enable me to identify with the work with all my senses'.

The participants continued to refer to the reading experience when answering the pedagogical question: 25 of the 27 respondents mentioned the importance of the emotional aspects of the work in relation to its appropriateness for teaching. However, there were only 83 statements (about half compared to the recreational question) relating to the emotional reading experience. Moreover, there was also a noticeable change in the language and emphasis. While 22 respondents regarded the ability of a work to please as an important criterion in defining it as good in the first question, only eight mentioned it in the second. Pleasure was not completely ignored, but mainly changed its form, and was replaced by a slightly different concern: not what would please the students, but what would interest them and whether they identify with the characters. Often, the term 'relevance' was used in this regard: while eight respondents used it in answering the first question, 24 used it in the second. Here are two examples:

Chocolate – there is not much relevance for children in Israel today; it is extremely hard for them to really identify with such a child, who can't afford to buy chocolate.

I think the students would find the story interesting and identify with it. Chocolate is a theme that is close to the students' heart [...]. Also, the ending, written in a personal tone by a child who is the students' contemporary may bring the story closer to their world.

This shift is captured in the words of a participant who began her answer to the first question by stating that 'A work of art is good if it makes a profound impression, evokes pleasure and influences the reader.' Her opening comments in response to the second question were: 'A good work will arouse the students' interest and stimulate their reflections beyond the teachers' requirements.'

4.2 *From literary beauty to literary devices*

The aesthetic considerations were also dominant in the prospective students' responses. Twenty-six respondents used them in the recreational reading section, and 24 in the pedagogical one. There was a sharp decline in the number of statements in the transition between sections: 206 in the recreational reading and only 58 in the pedagogical section. Once again, it is not only the numbers, but also the language that reflects the change. In recreational reading of the text, we found references to the poetic aspects of the story that relate to its beauty and spirit. Sometimes, the comments themselves are phrased poetically. Here are two examples:

The picturesque description, painted in contrasting colours, places the reader next to the child while he waits, day after day, for the brief moment when he will feel the exquisite golden smell.

Chocolate is the title of the story and its central motif. It is warm, brown, and sweet, and therefore embodies everything that the child did not have. But the child knew how to extract, out of the frost, warm moments of sweetness, if only because of his devotion to its smell. This scented chocolate is also identified with the image of his grandfather – it is the sweet memory that remains from the bonding between them.

When commenting on the story's appropriateness for teaching, the poetic language gave way to a much more practical approach, and the phrasing became more laconic. Fifteen of the respondents were concerned with the question whether the work lent itself to the teaching of literary devices, mostly (13) in the pedagogical reading. For instance, one participant wrote that an appropriate work was one that had 'obvious literary characteristics such as style, characterisation, plot, opening, exposition and major literary devices that can be pointed out and taught.' Some participants found 'Chocolate' appropriate or inappropriate for teaching because of the literary devices or their lack: 'In middle school you can use such a work for teaching literary devices', as opposed to: 'The story does not have many literary characteristics and elements I can use when teaching it.' A third respondent recognised the literary quality of the text, but thought that the poetic descriptions were too subtle for teaching:

The story is built on sensations and feelings, colours and colour contrasts, and mainly, the memory of that chocolate. This is aesthetically beautiful but not for teaching.

4.3 *From what the story is about to what it teaches us*

In the recreational reading section respondents elaborated on the content of the story – the plot, location, time, and events – as well as its meaning to them. The emphasis on the moral, ethical and social aspects of the text increased when they moved to the pedagogical reading. Although the difference was small and there was only a slight increase in the number of participants (20 to 23) and statements (60 to 72), this is the only category that exhibited an increase in the number of responses and respondents in the shift from recreational to pedagogical reading. Moreover, while the references to the ethical aspects were short in the recreational reading, they were much more elaborate in the pedagogical reading. One participant, for example, did not relate to ethical aspects at all when discussing 'Chocolate' in the recreational reading, but elaborated on these aspects in the pedagogical reading:

The story also has an ethical-moral aspect. One can say that the narrator wants to tell us not to forget the past; the past is the basis of our existence. Students can understand this message and try to get closer to the older generation and listen to their story.

Another participant wrote in the recreational reading: 'The story conveys an optimistic message about aspirations for a better future; aspirations that are realistic and legitimate and may strengthen us as a people.' In the pedagogical reading, she developed this point and added a proverb to reinforce the moral of the story:

The story conveys a [...] message about the ability of human beings and particularly children to be optimistic and overcome distress through reflection, diligence and appreciation of anything they are given. The boy in the story learned how to appreciate even the smallest thing while still aspiring for more, in the spirit of the proverb 'seek and you will find'.

The prospective teachers extracted multiple moral messages from the story: don't take for granted what you were given; nothing stands in the way of willpower; don't

forget the past, the basis for our existence; delay gratification; be happy with your share, and so forth. Altogether, when the prospective teachers referred to the ethical aspects of the text, they leaned toward traditional approaches, deriving moral messages from it, rather than using more modern critical approaches of analysing gender or social status.

4.4 *From reading to teaching*

Many participants took a highly practical approach, visualising themselves as literature teachers who had to adapt the story to their future classes. Twenty-two of the 27 prospective teachers became class- and task-oriented and referred to the school context, with reference to aspects such as the time needed to teach the story: 'In my opinion, not much time should be devoted to the story – no more than two or three lessons'. Another such aspect was the appropriate grade level: 'I would teach such a work in middle school (7th or 8th grade), but not in higher grades'. Finally, they wrote how they would begin their teaching: 'It is possible to ask the students, in the beginning, about their expectations from the title of the story'.

They also began considering what to emphasise when teaching the story. Aside from the reference to literary devices and the moral messages, they became very specific about themes they wanted to raise, and the way they would go about it. Here are two examples:

If I had to teach it, I would ask the question: What have I received from my parents and grandparents (character, messages, sentences for life), and what would I wish to convey to my children?

I would give the students additional information about the socio-economic conditions of the poor Russian people during that period, and compare past and present.

Finally, students suggested different activities related to the teaching of the story:

I would teach this story in a lesson of creative writing, because it has an element that can be developed – the characters (the grandson and the grandfather) are not well developed.

The story has potential for interesting activities. The teacher can hand out some chocolate to the students, especially if the lesson is at the end of the day when they are hungry, to promote their identification with the protagonist.

More than the particulars of the practical ideas proposed by the participants, what is interesting is what goes on in prospective teachers' minds on the verge of their teaching career. At this very early stage, and without being asked to do so, they already begin thinking like teachers facing a classroom.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, we wanted to learn about the criteria and language which prospective literature teachers use in appreciating a short story, and compare it to those used

when considering its suitability for teaching. We examined how the wording used in commenting on the story changed during the shift from readers to teachers.

The shift was expressed in less emphasis on artistic qualities, the reading experience, and the pleasure of reading, and more on relevance, literary terms, the teaching of values and practical ideas for the classroom. These findings are in keeping with Agee's (1997, 1998) and Zancanella's (1991) research, which emphasise the dominance of the school context and its influence on literature teachers' considerations. Our study adds another layer to their findings, by detailing differences in the language and in the thinking between the two attitudes towards the literary text, and characterising the nuances involved in some of the changes in the process.

The move from recreational to pedagogical reading is not without its pitfalls, which were revealed in the prospective teachers' responses. Teaching often entails some simplification or reduction of the original rich subject matter. We want to go beyond this obvious claim and show why some of this change is inevitable, and is more complex and multifaceted than it seems at first.

The transition from pleasure to relevance is necessary, because when we choose to read for our own pleasure, relevance is already there, as a precondition – the literary work, in that sense, has been preselected. Furthermore, if we find the book irrelevant or unappealing we can always stop reading. In choosing texts for students we must be more cautious, because they do not have the privilege of choosing the text in advance or of giving up on the assignment. Ensuring that the text is relevant is thus our responsibility as teachers, in the hope that relevance would yield enjoyment and a positive reading experience (Beach & Myers, 2001; Beach et al., 2006; Probst, 2004).

The shift from literary beauty to literary devices is more problematic. The literature matriculation exam at the end of 12th grade in Israeli high schools requires acquaintance with specific literary terms, and ability to identify them in literary works and explain their role. New Criticism is still very dominant in school examinations; prospective teachers are graduates of this system, and have themselves been examined in this spirit. They are also keenly aware of their duty to prepare their students for the matriculation examinations. The impact of the exams on teachers' considerations overshadows the curriculum goals (Ben-Peretz, 1980, 1991) and enforces instruction geared towards passing finals rather than fostering the love of literature. The prospective teachers have little leeway in this regard, and this may obviously impede the love of literature.

The third shift identified here, to the instilling of moral or ethical values, seems problematic: Some of the participants treated the text as a trove of didactic messages. They avoided implicit gender and class issues, and their moral attitude was not based on critical approaches to literature. It could be that they believe that literature discussions should not remain in the realm of aesthetics, but also address moral questions, but are not yet familiar with modern attitudes to critical reading and pedagogy. This calls for further research into the personal values of prospective teachers, as well as their perception of their educational role.

Our study is part of a socially grounded inquiry by teacher educators, who are critically engaged with the complexities of their professional practice. Therefore, the research was conducted in a particular context, as part of a course rather than an independently designed research, and the number of participants was small. Furthermore, the order of the task questions probably affected the participants' responses, and made them elaborate in the first section and offer more condensed responses in the second, pedagogical section. Despite these limitations, the study adds to the knowledge about the characteristics of the shift from readers to teachers.

As teacher educators, this study invites us to discuss the issue of appreciating and selecting texts for teaching with prospective teachers. The assignment provided the participants – as well as ourselves – with insights into the important shift from recreational reading to teaching, and the dilemmas that arose should be shared with other prospective teachers.

In conclusion, the symbolic role of the chocolate in the story and the change in its material state may be compared to the process undergone by the prospective teachers. The story opens with the smell of chocolate and ends with its taste, while the prospective teachers moved from a recreational or naïve reading of the story to a more concrete and utilitarian way of thinking about it. The delicate sweet smell, delivered freely by the blowing wind, is reminiscent of the free impressions of the prospective teachers' first reading. The piece of chocolate placed under the child's cold pillow at the end of the story may be compared to the story's adaptation to the more concrete classroom setting. In the story, the combination of the abstract, sublime and unattainable smell at the beginning with the sweet taste at the end left an unforgettable impression on the narrator. We hope that the sublime scent of reading would remain with prospective teachers when teaching stories as they offer a taste of literature to their students.

AUTHORS' NOTE

Though the authors' names are arranged in alphabetical order on the title page, this article is a collaborative enterprise.

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APPENDIX

'Chocolate' by Reuven Miran

The smoke rising from the chimney was white. The black chimney sprang up from the flat roof and was stranded in the soft belly of the low clouds.

It was snowing.

Smears of dense smoke spread across the sky and the wind dispersed them among the white snowflakes.

The wind blew gently across the frozen river. It bore the wispy snowflakes silently right into the nostrils, gaping wide open. There the ice melted, turning into running water. The child, standing alone in the deserted street, wiped it off with a grey piece of cloth. He stood facing the chocolate factory on the opposite bank of the river and gazed at the black chimney and the dense white smoke rising high into the grey sky that was shedding flimsy and almost transparent snowflakes.

The white snowflakes piled up on the child's shoulders, on his head and on the schoolbag on his back, full of books. He wore a dark woollen coat, whitened by the snow and enveloping him right down below his knees. He had a grey fur hat on his head, his big green eyes were wide open, shedding tears due to the silent wind constantly blowing at him across the river. His cheeks were red, and so were the lobes of his ears. A thick and coarse woollen shawl was tightly wrapped around his neck and rubbed against his soft skin. The child wanted to scratch himself but his hands, in warm gloves, were stuck deep down in his pockets.

He breathed deeply. His nostrils contracted and widened.

This is where he stopped every day on his way home, in this very spot, in the street that was always empty at this time, and breathed in deeply the smell of chocolate that the wind wafted here from the factory. It was the large chocolate factory in the capital city, working non-stop in shifts day and night.

This delicious chocolate cost a fortune, and only the happy few could afford it. Maybe only the Czar and the large families of aristocrats and merchants. But once a day, always during that desolate afternoon hour, the wind blowing across the river wafted the smell into this street, where the child was standing alone; it was a delicate sweet smell, a very special smell, and it was delivered for free above the ice covering the river, through the dry air, between the drab houses with walls stripped of plaster and falling apart, above the roofs loaded with snow, through the naked treetops.

The child knew the exact time and adjusted the pace of his walk home from school accordingly. He used to stand there alone, breathing in the sweet smell until the last possible moment, and then continued on his way home, before darkness fell.

The years passed, and the child grew up, married, and had children who grew up, married, and had children.

I was one of these grandchildren, and my grandfather was that child. Every evening before I went to sleep, he would sit down for a moment on the edge of my bed, put a small piece of sweet-smelling chocolate on my sparkling white and cold pillow, and, smiling under his white whiskers, quietly say 'good night' to me.

And this went on until the day he died.

Translated from the Hebrew by Hana Raz
Courtesy of the author