**Example from Reflective Writing: Guidance Notes for Students** byPete Watton Jane Collings and Jenny Moon, April 2001

**Reflection: The Park (version 4)**

I went past the park on the way to the shops. There were children playing there. I thought I knew some of them. They are a gang of kids who are perpetual bullies to other children who are younger or weaker than themselves. They have caused problems to my children quite recently. I stopped and watched them and I thought that they seemed to become a bit nervous – they must have realised who I was. I suppose there was a bit of intimidation intended on my part. I guess they were worried about what I might do.

They were running about. The sun was hot. One boy - probably a bit older than Charlie’s age - seemed more bothered and nervous than the others – rightly too – he was the main trouble-maker from what I recalled. He seemed to fall over – faking it in front of me I guessed. The others left him there anyway. That made me think even more that his was acting - I think he wanted me to feel sorry for him. I did not. Eventually the others called to him and he got up slowly – still faking it – then he fell again and I got fed up with his acting and went on to do my shopping. I felt cross. Thank goodness he was not coming to the party that my children were planning – though I am surprised that he had not managed to play-act his way into their sympathy given his current performance of manipulation.

Well yes – there was a bit more to the story. The next day’s paper said that a child had been taken ill in the park the previous day – and that he had been lying there for some time and he was very ill. It did also mention that there had been passers-by who had seen him there and had not done anything about it. Even the headline refered to that – ‘Why do they ‘Walk on by’?’ – what a silly headline!

Well what could I have done? I thought things were different – he couldn’t still be faking it at the hospital could he – or maybe the paper is short of news today and is exaggerating. Maybe he fell asleep on the ground and got cold and the other children eventually panicked – and maybe he decided to go on with his play-acting at the hospital. Knowing the family he comes from, I wouldn’t be surprised.

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That is how I thought about it on the day afterwards anyway. I wrote it all down in my journal - but I was a bit plagued by it. It kept coming back in my mind and gradually – over the next few days - I begun to think of him differently. Maybe he was ill when I saw him. Maybe I was caught up in the anger that the bullying activities of those kids had caused among some of us other parents and I could only see the boy in that light. Thinking of it in that way makes me realise that I should perhaps have acted differently. Bully though he might have been, I think now that he was ill – and maybe he was even coming near me in the hope that I might take pity on him.

But of course, I do not know the truth of the situation. I am sure that I would have acted differently if I had seen the situation as I did later. My reactions the next day would have been different and I would not be plagued as I am now by the feelings of irresponsibility. I guess I just hope that other parents don’t misconstrue my children’s actions in the way I misunderstood his – if I did.

This has all made me thing about how we view things. The way I saw this event at the time was quite different to the way I see it now. It is a year later. The story ran in the paper for some time because the boy was very ill indeed and he nearly died and the paper kept going back to the theme of people who do not take action and just stand and stare when there is an incident.

Thinking back to the time, the bullying was on my mind – mainly because we had been talking about it at breakfast. It had actually happened a while before – but the conversation had brought all the anger and upset to my mind – and then seeing them there – well I thought they were the same children – it is even possible that they were not. It was just so much on my mind at the time.

So I can see how I looked at that event and interpreted it in a manner that was consistent with my emotional frame of mind at the time. Seeing the same events without that breakfast conversation might have led me to see the whole thing in an entirely different manner and I might have acted differently. The significance of this whole event is chilling when I realise that my lack of action nearly resulted in his death. But how could I have seen it differently when I was caught up in that set of emotions? What mechanism could I have used in order to see if there were any other ways of construing it? How can I know that my perceptions in respect of some event are not distorted in such a way that I act in an inappropriate manner?