



Imagination as the Reconstruction of Experience in Katherine Paterson's Bridge to Terabithia

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-06-01 Revised: 2026-06-18 Accepted: 2026-06-30	<i>This study explores the role of imagination as a reconstruction of experience in the novel Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson through the theoretical lens of Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky's concept of imagination emphasizes that creative thought is not separate from reality but is instead formed through the reorganization of lived experiences. This research aims to analyze how the main characters, Jess Aarons and Leslie Burke, construct the imaginary world of Terabithia as a reflection and transformation of their real-life situations, emotions, and social interactions. The study employs a qualitative descriptive method, focusing on textual analysis of key narrative elements, including character development, setting, and dialogue. The findings reveal that Terabithia functions as a symbolic space where the characters process personal struggles such as family pressure, social isolation, and emotional vulnerability. Through imaginative play, the characters reconstruct their experiences into meaningful narratives that support their psychological and emotional growth. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of social interaction in shaping imagination, as seen in the collaborative creation of Terabithia. This aligns with Vygotsky's view that imagination develops within a social and cultural context. The novel demonstrates that imagination serves not only as an escape from reality but also as a cognitive and emotional tool for understanding and coping with life experiences.</i>
Keywords: Imagination, Reconstruction, experience, Bridge to Tabitha	
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1. Introduction

Literature serves as a powerful medium through which human experiences are represented, interpreted, and reimagined. Among the many elements that shape literary narratives, imagination occupies a central role, particularly in works that explore childhood and psychological development. Imagination allows individuals to go beyond the limitations of their immediate environment, enabling

them to reconstruct reality into meaningful and transformative forms. In this regard, the novel *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson provides a profound depiction of how imagination operates as a reconstruction of experience in the lives of children.

The story centers on Jess Aarons and Leslie Burke, two children who create an imaginary kingdom called Terabithia. This imaginative space becomes a refuge where they reinterpret their daily struggles, emotions, and social realities. Rather than functioning merely as an escape from reality, Terabithia represents a reconstructed version of their lived experiences. Jess, who struggles with familial expectations and a sense of inadequacy, and Leslie, who challenges social norms, both contribute elements of their real lives into the creation of this fantasy world. As such, imagination in the novel is deeply rooted in experience, reflecting a dynamic interplay between reality and creativity.

This perspective aligns closely with the theory of imagination proposed by Lev Vygotsky, who argued that imagination is not an isolated or purely fantastical process. Instead, it is grounded in real-life experiences and shaped by social interaction. Vygotsky (2004) states that "imagination is always built from elements taken from reality" (p. 9), emphasizing that creative activity involves the recombination of past experiences into new forms. This concept challenges the traditional view of imagination as detached from reality and instead positions it as a cognitive process that transforms and reinterprets lived experiences.

Furthermore, Vygotsky highlights the social nature of imagination, suggesting that it develops through interaction with others and through engagement with cultural tools such as language. He asserts that "the development of imagination in children is closely connected with the development of speech" (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 14). This idea is particularly relevant in *Bridge to Terabithia*, where the imaginative world of Terabithia is co-constructed through dialogue and shared experiences between Jess and Leslie. Their interactions not only shape the content of their imagination but also influence their emotional and cognitive development.

In addition to its social dimension, imagination is also closely linked to emotional experience. (Vygotsky, 2004) explains that "emotion and imagination are closely connected" (p. 10), indicating that individuals are more likely to engage in imaginative activity when they are emotionally involved. In the novel, the emotional bond between Jess and Leslie plays a crucial role in the creation and development of Terabithia. Their friendship provides the foundation for their imaginative exploration, allowing them to express feelings that may be difficult to articulate in reality. For Jess, in particular, Terabithia becomes a space where he can confront his fears, insecurities, and desires, ultimately contributing to his personal growth.

The significance of imagination as a psychological and cognitive process has been widely discussed in both literary and educational studies. According to

(Bruner, 1966), imagination plays a crucial role in learning, as it enables individuals to “go beyond the information given” (p. 72). This notion supports Vygotsky’s view that imagination is essential for problem-solving and creativity. In the context of literature, imagination allows characters to reinterpret their experiences and construct new meanings, making it a valuable tool for understanding human behavior and development.

Previous research on *Bridge to Terabithia* has primarily focused on themes such as friendship, loss, and identity. For instance, critics have examined how the novel portrays the emotional impact of loss and the process of coping with grief. While these studies provide important insights, they often overlook the underlying cognitive processes that shape the characters’ experiences. By applying Vygotsky’s theory of imagination, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how imagination functions as a mechanism for reconstructing experience in the novel.

Moreover, the relevance of this study extends beyond literary analysis to the field of education. Imagination is often undervalued in educational settings, where emphasis is placed on factual knowledge and standardized outcomes. However, as (Vygotsky, 1978) argues, “learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes” (p. 90), many of which are closely related to imaginative activity. By understanding how imagination operates in literary contexts, educators can better appreciate its role in cognitive and emotional development, thereby fostering more holistic approaches to learning.

The novel also illustrates the importance of imaginative play as a developmental tool. (Vygotsky, 1978) emphasizes that in play, “the child is always behaving beyond his average age, above his daily behavior” (p. 102). This concept is evident in the way Jess and Leslie engage with Terabithia, where they assume roles, create narratives, and explore possibilities that extend beyond their everyday lives. Through this process, they develop not only their imaginative capacities but also their ability to think critically and empathetically.

In addition, the collaborative nature of imagination in the novel highlights the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Jess and Leslie’s shared creation of Terabithia demonstrates how imagination can be a collective process, shaped by communication and mutual understanding. This supports Vygotsky’s view that higher mental functions originate in social interaction before being internalized by the individual. As he famously states, “every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57).

In conclusion, *Bridge to Terabithia* provides a rich and insightful representation of imagination as a reconstruction of experience. Through the lens of Vygotsky’s theory, the novel can be understood as a reflection of the complex relationship between reality, imagination, social interaction, and emotional development. By examining how the characters transform their lived experiences into imaginative narratives, this study aims to contribute to a deeper

understanding of both the literary text and the psychological processes it embodies. Ultimately, it underscores the importance of imagination as a fundamental aspect of human cognition and development, with significant implications for both literary studies and educational practice.

Research questions:

1. How do Jess Aarons and Leslie Burke reconstruct their lived experiences through imagination in *Bridge to Terabithia*?
2. How does social interaction influence the development of imagination in the novel, according to Lev Vygotsky's theory?

2. Literature Review

Vygotsky's Concept of Imagination

Vygotsky's concept of imagination occupies a central place in his broader theory of cognitive development, particularly in relation to creativity, social interaction, and the role of culture in shaping the human mind. Unlike earlier perspectives that tended to separate imagination from reality, Vygotsky proposed a fundamentally different view: imagination is not an escape from the real world, but rather a transformation and reconstruction of it. This idea situates imagination as a vital cognitive process that is deeply rooted in lived experience, emotional life, and social context.

At the core of Vygotsky's theory is the principle that all higher mental functions originate in social interaction. This includes imagination. Before becoming an internal mental activity, imagination is shaped externally through communication, play, storytelling, and shared cultural practices. Children, for instance, do not invent imaginative scenarios in isolation; they draw upon the language, symbols, and narratives provided by their social environment. These external influences are gradually internalized, forming the basis for independent imaginative thinking. In this sense, imagination is not purely individual or spontaneous, but socially constructed and culturally mediated.

One of Vygotsky's most important arguments is that imagination is built from experience. He asserts that creative activity depends on the richness and diversity of an individual's lived experiences. The more a person sees, hears, and engages with the world, the more material they possess for imaginative recombination. However, imagination is not a simple reproduction of reality. Instead, it involves the active reorganization of past experiences into new combinations. For example, a child who has seen animals, castles, and forests may combine these elements into a fantasy world populated by magical creatures.

Although the final image may appear entirely novel, it is actually constructed from fragments of real experiences. This process of recombination highlights the dynamic relationship between memory and imagination. Memory preserves past experiences, while imagination transforms them. Vygotsky emphasized that imagination relies on memory as its raw material, but it goes beyond mere recall

by reshaping and reinterpreting that material. In this way, imagination becomes a creative force that allows individuals to transcend the immediate present and envision possibilities that do not yet exist.

This capacity is essential not only for artistic expression but also for scientific thinking, problem-solving, and innovation. Another key dimension of Vygotsky's concept of imagination is its connection to emotion. He argued that imagination is deeply influenced by an individual's emotional experiences. Feelings such as joy, fear, anxiety, and desire often serve as powerful motivators for imaginative activity. When individuals encounter emotionally significant situations, they may use imagination to process, reinterpret, or cope with those experiences.

For instance, a child who feels lonely might imagine a world where they have close companions, thereby transforming their emotional reality into something more manageable. In this way, imagination functions as a psychological tool that helps individuals navigate complex emotional landscapes. Vygotsky also introduced the idea that imagination and reality are interconnected through what he described as a "dual relationship." On one hand, imagination depends on reality because it draws its content from real experiences.

On the other hand, imagination can influence reality by shaping how individuals perceive, interpret, and act upon the world. For example, an architect may imagine a new type of building before it is constructed, or a writer may create fictional narratives that reflect and critique social realities. In both cases, imagination serves as a bridge between what exists and what could exist, enabling individuals to transform their environment. A particularly important context for the development of imagination, according to Vygotsky, is play. In children, imaginative play provides a space where they can experiment with roles, rules, and social relationships.

When a child pretends to be a teacher, a doctor, or a hero, they are not merely imitating what they have seen; they are actively reinterpreting and reorganizing those experiences. Through play, children learn to separate meaning from objects, to use symbols, and to operate within imagined situations. This process contributes to the development of abstract thinking and self-regulation. Imaginative play, therefore, is not trivial or purely recreational; it is a crucial mechanism for cognitive and social development. The social dimension of imagination is further reinforced by Vygotsky's emphasis on language. Language is not only a tool for communication but also a medium through which imagination is expressed and developed.

Through storytelling, dialogue, and narrative, individuals share imaginative ideas and expand their cognitive horizons. Language allows people to describe things that are not immediately present, to construct hypothetical scenarios, and to engage in collective meaning-making. As individuals internalize language, it becomes a tool for organizing thought, including imaginative thought. This is why

Vygotsky considered language to be central to the development of higher mental functions.

In addition to its role in childhood development, Vygotsky saw imagination as essential for adult cognition as well. Creativity in fields such as art, science, and technology relies on the ability to imagine possibilities beyond current reality. Scientists, for instance, often develop hypotheses by imagining scenarios that have not yet been observed. Similarly, artists use imagination to create works that evoke emotions, challenge perceptions, and offer new ways of seeing the world. In both cases, imagination is not opposed to rational thinking but works in conjunction with it, enriching and extending human understanding.

Vygotsky also challenged the notion that imagination is inherently irrational or detached from logic. He argued that imaginative thinking follows its own form of logic, based on the relationships between experiences and the goals of the individual. While imagination may produce scenarios that are not immediately real, these scenarios are often grounded in meaningful patterns and purposes. For example, a person imagining a solution to a problem is guided by their knowledge, intentions, and constraints. Thus, imagination can be both creative and purposeful, contributing to effective problem-solving and decision-making.

Furthermore, Vygotsky highlighted the importance of cultural tools in shaping imagination. Cultural artifacts such as literature, art, myths, and media provide a rich source of imaginative material. By engaging with these cultural forms, individuals expand their repertoire of images, ideas, and narratives. This cultural dimension means that imagination is not only personal but also historical and collective. Different societies and historical periods produce different forms of imagination, reflecting their values, beliefs, and experiences. Therefore, understanding imagination requires attention to the cultural context in which it develops.

Another significant contribution of Vygotsky's theory is the idea that imagination is future-oriented. Unlike memory, which is focused on the past, imagination allows individuals to anticipate and plan for the future. By envisioning possible outcomes, people can make decisions, set goals, and prepare for challenges. This forward-looking aspect of imagination is essential for adaptation and growth. It enables individuals to move beyond immediate circumstances and to shape their own development.

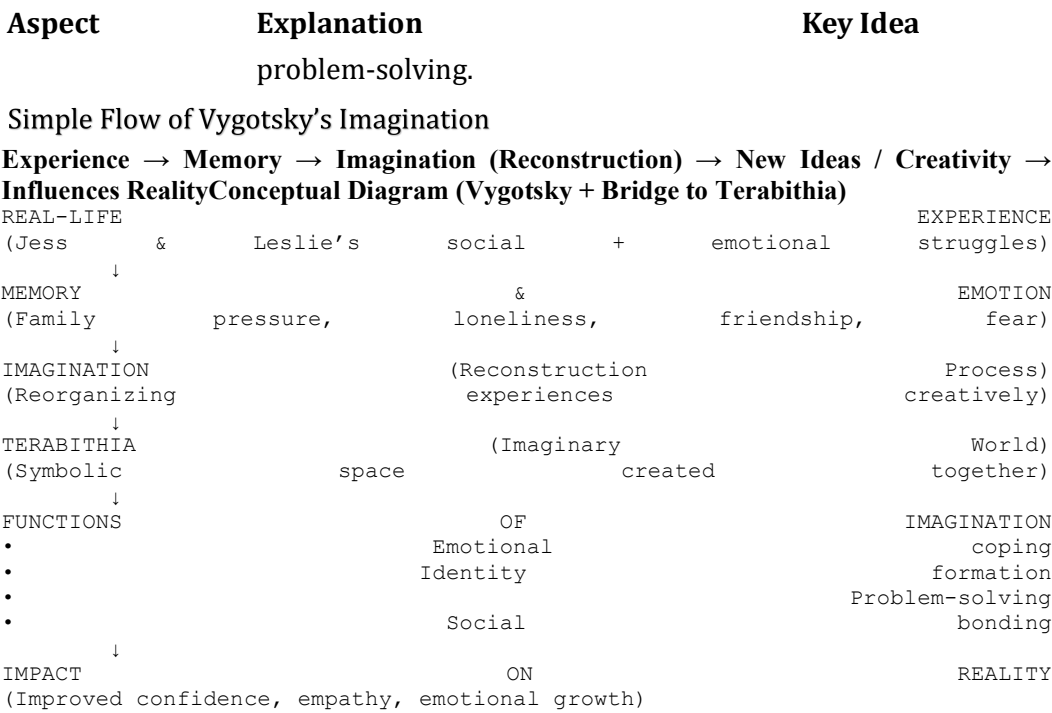
In educational contexts, Vygotsky's concept of imagination has important implications. It suggests that learning should not be limited to the passive absorption of information but should involve active, creative engagement. Teachers can support the development of imagination by providing rich experiences, encouraging exploration, and fostering social interaction. Activities such as storytelling, role-playing, and creative problem-solving can help students develop their imaginative capacities. Moreover, by recognizing the connection

between imagination and emotion, educators can create learning environments that are both intellectually stimulating and emotionally supportive.

In conclusion, Lev Vygotsky's concept of imagination presents a comprehensive and dynamic view of creativity as a socially grounded, experience-based, and emotionally driven process. Imagination, in his theory, is not a departure from reality but a means of transforming it. It emerges from the interaction between memory, emotion, language, and social context, and it plays a crucial role in both individual development and cultural production. By enabling individuals to reconstruct past experiences and envision future possibilities, imagination serves as a powerful cognitive and emotional tool that connects the inner world of thought with the outer world of social reality.

Vygotsky's Concept of Imagination

Aspect	Explanation	Key Idea
Definition of Imagination	Imagination is the ability to create new ideas by reorganizing past experiences.	Not separate from reality
Source of Imagination	Comes from real-life experiences (memory, environment, culture).	Built from experience
Process	Involves combining, modifying, and transforming past experiences into new forms.	Reconstruction of reality
Role of Memory	Memory provides the raw material for imagination.	Memory → Imagination
Role of Emotion	Emotions influence what and how individuals imagine.	Emotion shapes creativity
Social Nature	Imagination develops through interaction with others and cultural context.	Socially constructed
Role of Language	Language helps express and develop imagination through communication and storytelling.	Language as a tool
Function in Development	Helps cognitive, emotional, and social growth.	Supports development
Role in Play	Play allows children to experiment with roles and imagined situations.	Learning through play
Connection to Reality	Imagination is based on reality but can reshape and influence it.	Reality ↔ Imagination
Future Orientation	Enables planning, prediction, and problem-solving.	Thinking ahead
Creative Function	Used in art, science, and everyday	Basis of creativity



General Analysis of Narrative Elements (Indirect Quotations)

Narrative elements are essential components that structure and give meaning to literary texts. A narrative typically consists of interconnected elements such as character, setting, plot, dialogue, and symbolism, which work together to present events and human experiences in a coherent way. (Abrams, 2015, Wadsworth Cengage Learning) explains that a narrative involves a sequence of events that are shaped by characters and their actions, indicating that these elements cannot be separated from one another in literary analysis.

Characterization is a central aspect of narrative because it allows readers to understand the personalities, motivations, and development of individuals within a story. According to Forster (1927, Edward Arnold), characters can be categorized into different types based on their complexity, such as flat and round characters, with round characters showing greater psychological depth and development. This suggests that characterization plays a key role in shaping readers’ emotional engagement and interpretation of the narrative.

Setting provides the context in which the story takes place, including time, location, and social environment. Kennedy & Gioia (2016, Pearson) describe setting as not only the physical background but also the cultural and historical conditions that influence the characters and events. This highlights that setting is closely related to the development of conflict and theme within a narrative.

Plot refers to the structured arrangement of events in a story. The concept of plot has been discussed since classical times, where Aristotle (1996, Penguin Classics) emphasizes that plot is the organization of incidents in a logical and unified sequence. This organization ensures that events are meaningfully connected

through cause-and-effect relationships, which helps to create tension and resolution in the narrative.

Dialogue is another important narrative element that contributes to both characterization and plot development. Burroway (2019, University of Chicago Press) states that dialogue functions as a tool to reveal characters' personalities while simultaneously moving the story forward. Through dialogue, readers gain insight into relationships, conflicts, and underlying themes within the narrative.

Symbolism adds depth to a literary work by representing abstract ideas through concrete elements. William Harmon (2009, Pearson) explains that symbols allow writers to convey meanings beyond the literal level, encouraging readers to interpret the text more critically. This makes symbolism an important device for expressing themes and enhancing the complexity of a narrative.

In addition to these elements, point of view plays a significant role in shaping how a story is presented. Gérard Genette (1980, Cornell University Press), discusses how narrative perspective determines the flow of information and the reader's access to characters' thoughts and experiences. Different narrative perspectives can influence how readers perceive events and interpret the story.

Furthermore, narrative structure contributes to the overall coherence and meaning of a text. Seymour Chatman (1978, Cornell University press) distinguishes between story (the content of events) and discourse (the way the story is told), emphasizing that both aspects are essential in narrative analysis. This distinction helps readers understand how authors organize and present their ideas.

Finally, narrative elements function collectively to produce meaning and aesthetic experience. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (2002, Routledge) argues that narrative fiction is constructed through multiple interrelated components that guide interpretation and shape readers' responses. This reinforces the idea that analyzing narrative elements is crucial for understanding how literature represents human experience.

3. Method

Research Methodology

This study employs a **qualitative descriptive method** to explore the reconstruction of lived experiences through imagination and the role of social interaction in the development of imagination in *Bridge to Terabithia*. The qualitative approach is appropriate because it allows an in-depth understanding of psychological and social processes, which cannot be quantified easily, particularly the inner experiences of characters as represented in the narrative. According to (Creswell, 2014), qualitative research enables researchers to analyze phenomena in context and provides rich descriptive data that capture complex human experiences.

Research Design

The study uses **textual analysis** as the primary research design. Textual analysis is a method for interpreting and examining written texts to understand how meaning is constructed, both explicitly and implicitly (Krippendorff, 2013). In this research, the novel *Bridge to Terabithia* serves as the primary text, and key narrative elements character development, setting, dialogue, and symbolism are analyzed to understand how imagination functions in reconstructing lived experiences. The theoretical lens guiding the analysis is Lev Vygotsky's concept of imagination, which posits that imaginative thought is socially mediated and arises from the reorganization of lived experiences.

Data Collection

Data collection involved a **systematic reading and extraction of relevant passages** from the novel. The researcher focused on incidents where Jess Aarons and Leslie Burke engage in imaginative activities, particularly in Terabithia, the imaginary kingdom they create. Passages were selected based on their relevance to:

1. Demonstrating how imagination reconstructs past experiences and emotions.
2. Showing how social interaction between the characters supports imaginative development.

Direct textual quotations and paraphrased events were documented, and notes were organized according to narrative elements, including:

- **Characterization:** how Jess and Leslie reflect on or reshape experiences through imagination.
- **Setting:** the role of Terabithia as a symbolic space for imaginative reconstruction.
- **Dialogue:** interactions that demonstrate the co-creation of imaginative experiences.
- **Symbolism:** symbolic events or objects that represent emotional processing or personal growth.

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed **thematic content analysis** as outlined by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The steps included:

1. **Familiarization:** The researcher read the novel multiple times to gain an in-depth understanding of character interactions and imaginative scenes.
2. **Coding:** Relevant passages were coded according to two main themes corresponding to the research questions:
 - *Reconstruction of lived experiences through imagination*
 - *Influence of social interaction on imaginative development*

3. **Theme Identification:** Subthemes emerged during coding, such as emotional coping, identity formation, empowerment, collaboration, and social negotiation.
4. **Interpretation:** Passages were analyzed through the lens of Lev Vygotsky's theory, emphasizing the role of social interaction and cultural mediation in shaping imagination.
5. **Synthesis:** Findings were integrated to answer the research questions and demonstrate how narrative elements support the development of imagination in the novel.

The method ensured that analysis remained **grounded in textual evidence**, while theoretical interpretation highlighted the relevance of Vygotsky's perspective on imaginative and cognitive development.

3. Result

The findings are organized around the two research questions. Each section integrates textual evidence with analysis through Vygotsky's theoretical framework.

Reconstruction of Lived Experiences through Imagination

The first research question examines how Jess Aarons and Leslie Burke reconstruct their lived experiences through imagination. The analysis shows that imagination in the novel functions as a **mechanism for processing emotional challenges, reframing experiences, and developing personal identity**.

1. Emotional Processing and Coping

Jess and Leslie use Terabithia as a space to manage feelings of isolation, fear, and family pressure. For example, Jess initially struggles with insecurity and social exclusion, but in Terabithia, he is described as "the strongest, the bravest, the best," demonstrating a reimagined self that contrasts with his real-life limitations (Paterson, 1977, p. 52). According to (Lev Vygotsky, 2004), imagination allows individuals to reorganize experiences, meaning that the characters' imaginative play is not mere fantasy but a cognitive process to reinterpret reality. By reconstructing these experiences into a safe, controllable environment, they can experiment with emotions and problem-solving strategies.

2. Identity Formation

Imagination also enables identity reconstruction. Jess gradually internalizes aspects of Leslie's imaginative confidence. For instance, when Leslie declares, "We need a place... just for us," she invites Jess to participate actively in world-building (Paterson, 1977, p. 37). By collaborating, Jess reconstructs his self-concept as someone capable of creativity, leadership, and emotional resilience. (Vygotsky, 2004) emphasizes that imaginative activity allows children to explore possibilities

beyond their immediate experiences, demonstrating that the kingdom of Terabithia serves as a symbolic space for self development.

3. Reframing Reality through Symbolism

The symbolic dimension of Terabithia further demonstrates how imagination reconstructs experience. Challenges in the imaginary world, such as defeating the "Dark Master," mirror real life fears (Paterson, 1977, p. 60). This externalization allows the characters to confront internal struggles indirectly. Through this symbolic transformation, Terabithia functions as a bridge between lived experience and cognitive reinterpretation, highlighting the therapeutic and developmental role of imagination.

4. Narrative Dialogue as Reconstruction

Dialogue between the characters often reflects their emotional and cognitive reconstruction. Leslie's encouragement, "Let's make Terabithia a place where we can be anyone we want," allows Jess to negotiate his fears and ambitions (Paterson, 1977, p. 41). Through these interactions, imagination becomes a collaborative reconstruction process where experiences are reframed and internalized for personal growth.

Influence of Social Interaction on Imagination Development

The second research question investigates how social interaction shapes imaginative development in the novel, in line with Vygotsky's theory.

1. Collaborative Creation of Terabithia

Vygotsky posits that imagination is socially mediated and emerges from interaction with others. In the novel, Leslie and Jess co-construct Terabithia, demonstrating this principle. For example, they discuss roles and adventures together: "He would be the king, and she the queen" (Paterson, 1977, p. 45). This collaborative process illustrates that imagination is not an isolated cognitive activity but is enhanced and enriched through social interaction.

2. Role of Dialogue in Imaginative Co-Construction

The novel emphasizes that dialogue is a critical medium for shaping imagination. Through conversations about rules, stories, and challenges in Terabithia, Jess and Leslie refine ideas, share perspectives, and negotiate meaning. This aligns with Vygotsky's assertion that imaginative thought develops within a **social and cultural context**, where interaction mediates cognitive and emotional growth.

3. Peer Influence and Emotional Support

Social interaction also provides emotional scaffolding. Leslie's constant support encourages Jess to take imaginative risks and explore new perspectives. As she

tells him, “We can do anything here that we can’t do anywhere else” (Paterson, 1977, p. 50), she affirms the legitimacy of imaginative exploration. Vygotsky (2004) argues that the social environment is crucial for the internalization of higher mental functions, including imagination. In this sense, Terabithia is both a social and psychological space where imagination is nurtured.

4. Shared Symbolism

Shared imaginative experiences also reinforce social bonds. When the children face imagined obstacles, such as crossing the rope swing to reach Terabithia, the collaborative effort strengthens both the imaginative process and interpersonal connection (Paterson, 1977, p. 42). This demonstrates that imagination develops through cooperative activity, consistent with Vygotsky’s theory that cognition is socially distributed before becoming internalized.

5. Integration into Real-Life Learning

Finally, social interaction influences how imaginative experiences translate into real-life growth. Jess extends the lessons learned in Terabithia to his broader life, demonstrating enhanced confidence and empathy after collaborative imaginative play (Paterson, 1977, p. 92). This underscores Vygotsky’s claim that imaginative reconstruction of experience is both cognitive and socially mediated.

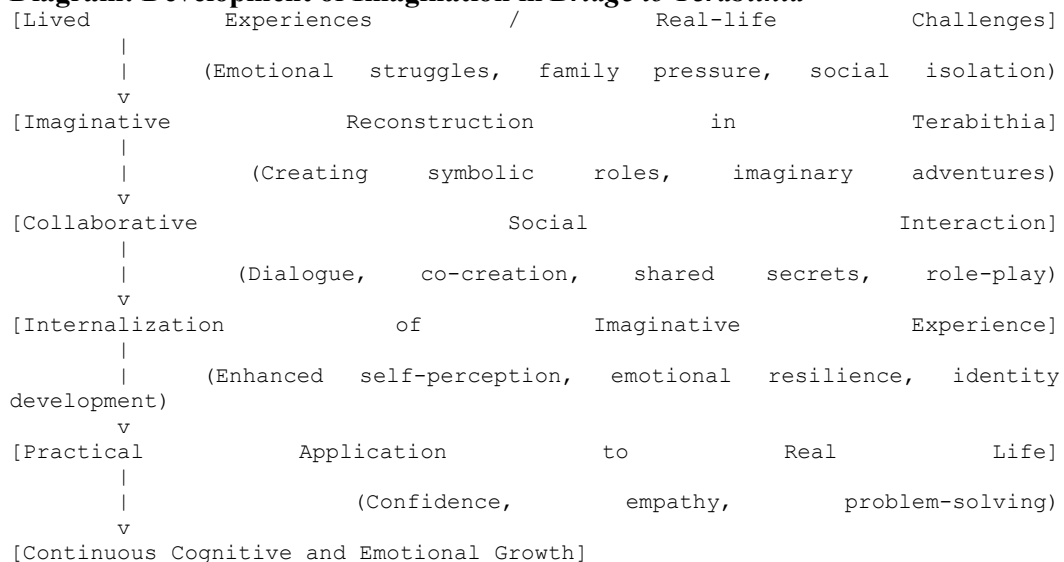
Table 1: Linkage of Textual Evidence to Research Questions and Vygotsky’s Theory

No.	Quotation / Narrative Scene / Element	Research Question	Vygotsky Concept Applied	Analysis / Significance
1	“It was one of those days when Jess could barely get through the required work at school.” (Paterson, 1977, p. 10)	Characterization 1	Imagination reconstructs lived experiences	Jess’s frustration and limitation in real life highlight the starting point of imaginative reconstruction. Terabithia allows him to reimagine his capabilities.
2	“Leslie named it Terabithia.” (Paterson, 1977, p. 37)	Setting 1	Imagination as reorganization of experience	The creation of Terabithia transforms ordinary space into a symbolic world where

No.	Quotation / Narrative Scene Element	Research Question	Vygotsky Concept Applied	Analysis / Significance
3	"We need a place... just for us." Dialogue (Paterson, 1977, p. 37)	2	Social mediation of imagination	experiences are reshaped. Leslie's invitation shows how social interaction of initiates collaborative imaginative activity. Role assignment allows
4	"He would be the king, and she the queen." Dialogue / Role-play (Paterson, 1977, p. 45)	2	Imagination develops through social play	exploration of identity and social roles, reinforcing Vygotsky's idea of imagination as socially constructed.
5	"They must defeat the Dark Master." Symbolism (Paterson, 1977, p. 60)	1	Imagination as emotional and cognitive tool	Imagined challenges reflect real-life fears; symbolic play helps process emotions.
6	"The strongest, the bravest, the best." Characterization (Paterson, 1977, p. 52)	1	Cognitive reconstruction of self	Imaginary identities allow Jess to reconstruct self-perception and build confidence.
7	"Terabithia was their secret, which no one else could share." Setting / Symbolism (Paterson, 1977, p. 41)	2	Social interaction and shared experience	The secrecy of Terabithia reinforces collaborative creation and strengthens emotional bonds.
8	"Let's make Dialogue	2	Collaborative	The dialogue

No.	Quotation / Narrative Scene Element	Research Question	Vygotsky Concept Applied	Analysis / Significance
	Terabithia a place where we can be anyone we want.” (Paterson, 1977, p. 41)		imagination	encourages co-creation of imaginative space, showing social scaffolding.
9	“Leslie was more than his friend. She was his other, more exciting self.” (Paterson, 1977, p. 92)	Characterization / Reflection 1	Internalization of social interaction	Jess internalizes the imaginative experiences shared with Leslie, demonstrating Vygotsky’s principle that social interaction shapes cognitive growth.

Diagram: Development of Imagination in *Bridge to Terabithia*



Explanation of the Diagram

1. Lived Experiences / Real-life Challenges:

Jess and Leslie face academic pressure, social exclusion, and emotional

struggles. These experiences serve as the raw material for imagination (Paterson, 1977, p. 10).

2. Imaginative Reconstruction in Terabithia:

They transform ordinary settings into Terabithia, a symbolic kingdom where they explore identity and manage fears (Paterson, 1977, pp. 37–52). This aligns with Vygotsky (2004), who emphasizes that imagination reorganizes lived experience.

3. Collaborative Social Interaction:

Dialogue and shared imaginative play allow co-construction of the imaginary world ("We need a place... just for us," Paterson, 1977, p. 37). Social mediation enhances creativity and emotional engagement.

4. Internalization of Imaginative Experience:

Through repeated interaction and reflection, Jess internalizes the lessons of Terabithia ("Leslie was more than his friend. She was his other, more exciting self," Paterson, 1977, p. 92), demonstrating Vygotsky's principle that cognitive functions are socially mediated before internalization.

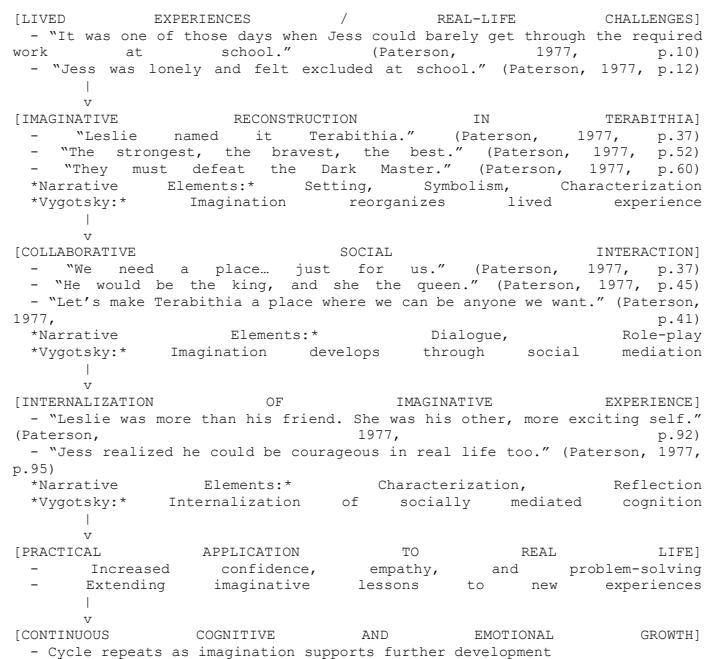
5. Practical Application to Real Life:

Skills and emotional resilience developed in the imaginary world influence real-life behavior, such as increased confidence and empathy.

6. Continuous Cognitive and Emotional Growth:

The cycle continues, as imaginative play nurtures further cognitive and emotional development, consistent with Vygotsky's idea that imagination supports higher mental functions.

Figure 1: Development of Imagination in Bridge to Terabithia (with Evidence)



6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study confirms that *Bridge to Terabithia* exemplifies Vygotsky's theory: imagination is a reconstruction of experience, developed collaboratively through social interaction, and serving both cognitive and emotional purposes.

The findings reveal that:

1. **Imagination reconstructs lived experience:** Jess and Leslie transform personal challenges into symbolic, manageable experiences in Terabithia, supporting emotional regulation, identity formation, and cognitive growth.
2. **Social interaction is critical:** Collaboration, dialogue, and shared imaginative play enhance creativity, reinforce social bonds, and allow internalization of cognitive strategies.
3. **Terabithia as a symbolic and social space:** The imaginary kingdom functions simultaneously as a cognitive tool and a social scaffold, reflecting Vygotsky's notion of imagination as socially and culturally situated.

Integration of imagination into reality: Imaginative experiences in Terabithia influence real life behavior, demonstrating the practical and transformative power of imagination.

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