

About writing a literature review

Barbara Kamler and Pat Thompson (2006) conducted research on the metaphors and images from their students. When thinking about writing their literature reviews, students used these images. Here are some of the results:

There were lots of water metaphors:

A chaotic whirlpool
An ocean full of sharks
A stormy ocean

Not being prepared metaphors:

Trying to swim with concrete blocks on my feet
Setting off across the ocean in a canoe

Puzzle/maze:

Walking into a tunnel
Walking in the dark
Going through a maze in search of hidden treasure

Pain and discomfort:

Pulling teeth
Sweating blood
Being hit by a truck
Sinking in quicksand

Animals:

Eating a live elephant
Persuading an octopus into a glass (this one became the title of Chapter 3 in Kamler's & Thompson's text)

More benign images:

Collecting seashells
Digging in the ground for precious metal
Building a brick wall, laying down one brick at a time until this magnificent wall has been created
Looking into a kaleidoscope, a mosaic which keeps shifting

These, of course, are attempts to capture the range of feelings we have writing a literature review. They are here just to remind you that if you feel like any of the above, it's not just you! These are common feelings and as you work through the literature review section of your research, you will hopefully get to the stage of seeing the 'magnificent brick wall' you have created.