

**Picturebooks & Comprehension**  
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### **Picturebooks**

A picturebook is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; an art form; a social, cultural and historical document; and foremost, an experience for the child. (Bader, 1976).

### **Reconceptualizing Picturebooks as:**

- Textual Narratives
- Visual Narratives
- Multimodal Ensembles
- Cultural Artifacts
- Digital Applications

### **Why Picturebooks?**

- **Micro-Texts** - able to read and discuss complete texts in a single session
- Contain a wide **Variety of Genres**, topics, themes, authors, illustrators, formats, literary devices
- **Introduce Strategies** in familiar contexts
- Provide opportunities for **Discussion** of significant topics
- Picturebooks require readers to attend to several **Systems of Meaning** (text, image, design)
- Picturebooks are visual, artistic, and multimodal texts that are **Sanctioned** in classrooms.

### **Comprehension Strategies**

The strategies readers utilize when reading are directly related to the texts they are reading, and why they are reading them.

### **Reading Where the Wild Things Are:**

As a bedtime story...

For one's own enjoyment...

For a discussion in a children's lit class...

To write a book review...

To take an Accelerated Reader quiz...

As a model for one's writing...

As a model for one's illustrations...

In a guided reading group...

## So What?

We need to understand the various elements of picturebooks **OURSELVES** before we can facilitate better discussions with our students!

### Picturebook elements:

- **Artistic:** Drawing on various techniques and styles in the history of art movements and criticism.
- **Visual Grammar:** Drawing on work in semiotics and visual grammar, including Composition, Perspective, and Viewer Interactions
- **Design:** Drawing on the graphic and structural design elements in multimodal texts

### Artistic

- Realism
- Folk Art
- Modern Art
- Surrealism

### Questions to Ask

How does the art movement add to the theme, mood, or representation of the story?

What simple aspects of the art movement can be used to understand the narrative?

Why did the author choose this artistic technique or movement?

How would your interpretations change if the art style changed?

### Elements of Visual Grammar

#### Perspective

- Point of view for viewer and actors in an image – where viewers are positioned.
- Has socially determined meaning potentials.
- Provides viewer with their “window on the world.”
- Creates involvement or detachment, and suggests power structures.

### Questions to Ask

Where are the characters located?

Are objects or people positioned above, below or straight on?

How does your position as viewer affect your interpretations?

### Viewer Interactions

- How is the viewer being asked to interact with the characters in the image?
- **Demand** - requires active response to characters in an image.
- **Offer** - placed in voyeuristic position, viewers look at what characters are looking at.

### Questions to Ask

Which characters are looking at you? How does this affect your relationship with the character?

Which characters are looking away from you?

What are you being asked to consider?

How would the image change if the characters looked at you or not?

### Interpersonal Distance

- The social distance suggested by an image as to how close or far away you are positioned from the characters.
- Creates intimacy and closeness with characters or suggests an informal, distanced relationship.
- Can provide us with perspectives we rarely have in real life (close ups).

### Questions to Ask

Which characters are portrayed close-up and which ones are from a greater distance?

How does distance affect the meaning potentials of an image?

Which characters seem more powerful because of their position and distance?

### Design Elements

#### Roles of Endpapers

- Connections to Story
- Thematic
- Part of the Narrative

### Questions to Ask

Are the endpages the same in front and back?

If they are the same or single colored pages, is there a thematic connection to the narrative?

If they are different, how do the endpages add to the narrative?

### Typography

- the **visual component** of language
- the **style, arrangement, and appearance** of printed letters on a page
- attributes to both planes of **expression** and planes of **meaning**
- **tool** for doing things with text

### Typographical Elements

- Weight, color, size, Formality, and flourishes
- Color can be used for classifying elements and developing associations among elements. Color has been associated with particular meanings or emotions in social contexts.
- Size can add emphasis or importance to certain words.

- Relatively equal sizes can suggest association or decrease emphasis.
- Formal and informal fonts suggest status, personality and power relations.
- Flourishes can suggest action, style, vectors, and movement.

### **Visual Design Features**

- Are part of the illustrations or ancillary to them
- Adds motion and designates movement paths
- Signifies who is speaking
- Shows mental states or provides interior dialogue

### **Visual Design Features**

- Speech / Thought Bubbles
- Upfixes
- Impact Stars
- Motion Lines
- Reduplication

### **Some implications**

1. As texts continue to evolve into digital and multimodal ensembles, the strategies readers will need to be successful will have to evolve as well.
2. We cannot teach strategies in isolation, they only make sense once we know what a reader is reading and why they are reading it.
3. Teachers need to know this stuff if we are to expect them to teach it.

**Thank You!**

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