

Expanding Perspectives on Comprehending Picturebooks

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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text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; an art form; a social, cultural and historical document; and foremost, an experience for the child. It hinges on the interplay of illustrations and written text, the simultaneous display of two facing pages and the drama of the turning page (Bader, 1976).

Image & Text

Image - Decoration or Signification?

An Illustrated Text is different from a Picturebook

Interplay varies among images, design elements and written text

Visual (Image) and textual (Word) draw upon different semiotic resources

Analyzing Picturebooks

Making Sense of Multimodal Texts

Art, Structures and Design

The Role of Art in Picturebooks

Artistic Styles

Interplay of Text & Illustration

Paratextual Resources

Orientation & Design

Fonts

Borders

Basic Art Elements

3 Roles of Art in Illustration

Reproduction - artworks transferred into book and used as pieces of art

Transformation - art transformed into illustrations - remains recognizable as a particular piece of art

Stylization - artistic style is translated into the illustrations, but no single work of art is referenced

Artistic Styles: Drawing on Art Movements

Realism

Folk Art

Modern Art

Surrealism

Art and Illustrations

Art plays different roles in illustrations from making connections to “real” art to giving the reader clues about how to read a picturebook.

Illustrations are a form of art and work within a particular style or movement.

Various art movements have different goals and different modes of representation.

Interplay of Text & Illustrations

Symmetrical - images parallel the information provided in the text and vica versa

Enhancing - illustrations enhance the text and vica versa

Counterpoint - images provide information that is contradicted by the text and vica versa

Text-Image Interplay

You can't tell a reader to look at the picture for clues to reading words in a counterpoint text.

Both Symmetrical AND Enhancing texts should be part of primary classrooms.

Avoid Picture Walks - they treat the illustrations as prompts for reading texts rather than as a system of meaning.

Design & Meaning

Deliberate choices by artists, graphic designers, publishers

Images are NOT Illustrating text, nor Decorations, own system of Meaning

Image + Text + Design = Picturebook

Picturebook Design: Paratextual Resources

Peri-Textual = inside book, outside actual story

dedications, author blurbs, jacket, title page, covers, end pages

Epi-Textual = outside book

book reviews, advertisements, critical articles, websites, fan fiction

Peri-Textual Resources

Cover

Title - Fonts

Dedication

Title Page

End Pages

Author Blurb

Jacket Information

Epi-Textual Resources

Book Reviews

Author Interviews

Critical Analyses and Articles

Advertisements

History of the Work

Other Books from Author / Illustrator

Other Genre Examples

Paratextual Resources

Dedicate about 15% of your time in read alouds discussing the peritextual features of a text.

Making connections to epitextual resources (websites, interviews, critical essays) can greatly enhance one's comprehension of a text.

More narrative and humor can be found in these resources in contemporary texts.

Picturebook Design: Font - Text as Visual Image

Bold vs. Timid

Modern vs. Classic

Playful vs. Serious

Fictional Fonts vs. Non-Fiction Fonts

Picturebook Design: Orientation

Horizontal - Landscape, binocular plane, soothing, familiar

Vertical - Portrait, dynamic, unstable

Square - Stable, solid, comforting

Inverted - changing opening of a text, call attention to particular features

Picturebook Design: Borders

Windows into Illustrations

Boundary between Reality and Imagination

Thick Borders or Faded Edges

Breaking Borders "Call for Interaction"

Frame Images - Composition

Font, Borders, Orientation

These elements are used to create a unified design in picturebooks.

Intentional decisions about these elements are made to add to meaning and interpretive possibilities.

Calling attention to these elements teach students how to read the picturebooks they encounter.

We often overlook design elements because they are in the "background."

Picturebook Design: Basic Art Elements

Line

Vertical Lines: indicates stability, height, separates elements in image

Horizontal Lines: bring elements together, calming

Diagonal lines: suggest motion and movement

Thin Lines: suggest frailty, an elegant quality

Thick Lines: suggest strength or provide emphasis

Shapes / Patterns

Repeated shapes are patterns

Shapes can be open or closed, angular or round

Basic shapes:

Circle - comfort, protection, endlessness

Square - stability, honesty, conformity

Triangle - dynamic tension, action, conflict

Color

Red: power, warmth, anger, energy or passion, active

Green: associated with nature, calming, cool
Blue: restful, calm, sense of detachment, serenity or melancholy, passive
Yellow: happiness or caution, warmth
Orange: associated with fall, seasonal
Black: dark moods, scary, depressing

Negative Space

Commonly Referred to as “White Space”

Can serve as a Frame

Focus on Subject of the Image

Provides context for characters

Ranges from extensive use to full bleed images with no negative space

Picturebook Design: Postmodern Elements

Postmodern Elements

Non-Linear Structures

Self-Referentiality

Multiple Narratives

Parody

Surrealistic Imagery

Postmodern Picturebooks

Calls attention to our processes of reading.

Makes readers more active.

Meanings are more ambiguous, no single main ideas.

Playful, enjoyable books to read.

Can challenge some readers with their unusual features.

Requires readers to engage over more than one reading to “get it.”

Levels the “playing field” of readers in the classroom.

Final Considerations

Deliberate choices are made by artists, graphic designers, publishers, therefore than can be interpreted.

Images are NOT simply Illustrating the text, nor Decorations, They are Their own System of Meaning.

Multimodal Texts require additional comprehension strategies than printed text alone.