What Makes A Good Picture Book

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OUTLINE:

- What is a picture book
- Elements of a good picture book
- Q & A
WHY DO CHILDREN NEED PICTURE BOOKS?

- Pictures help children understand what they are reading and allow young readers to analyze the story.
- Picture books help develop story sense.
- Picture books are multi-sensory, which aids a child’s growing mind and stimulates their imagination.

“and what is the use of a book,” thought Alice, “without pictures or conversations in it?”

(Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll)
CHARACTERISTICS OF PICTURE BOOKS

• Usually 32 pages
• Pictures dominate text
• Pictures integrate with the text to bring the story to a satisfying conclusion
• Word count is generally less than 2000 words

Reference: Schulevitz, U. “What is a Picture Book”. Five Owls, 1988
The Picture Book Defined

- Pictures that are integral to understanding the text
- Pictures that carry the weight of the story
- Pictures as visual representation of the text
- Pictures that provide a different viewpoint
- Pictures and text tell different stories

Reference: Schulevitz, U. “What is a Picture Book”. Five Owls, 1988
CALDECOTT AWARD

"A picture book for children, as distinguished from other books with illustrations, is one that essentially provides the child with a visual experience”

The Caldecott Medal

• Awarded annually by the American Library Association, to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children

The Caldecott Honor

• Caldecott “runner-ups”
• Cited as other books worthy of attention
WHAT MAKES A GOOD PICTURE BOOK?
~ PICTURES

• Pictures
  • Good use of visual elements to create literature

The Napping House
Audrey Wood
JP WOO

Adventures of Beekle
Dan Santat
JP SAN
What Makes a Good Picture Book?

~ Pictures

- Pictures
- Illustrations that have storytelling qualities

A Ball for Daisy
Chris Raschka
JP RAS

Flora and the Flamingo
Molly Idle
JP IDL
What Makes a Good Picture Book?
~ Pictures

- **Pictures**
- Style of art that is appropriate to the story

*The True Story of The 3 Little Pigs*
Jon Scieszka
JP SCI

*Why Mosquitos buzz in people's Ears*
Verna Aardema
JP 398.2 AAR
WHAT MAKES A GOOD PICTURE BOOK?
~ PICTURES

• Pictures
  • Help create the mood of the story
  • Images that enhance the narrative rather than just mirror the text

Creepy carrots!
Aaron Reynolds
JP REY

Gorilla
Anthony Browne
JP BRO
The Use of Shapes in Picture Books

Circle
- Suggests completeness and wholeness
- Being enclosed in circle suggests warmth and love

Squares and rectangles
- Suggests rigidity, dullness and conformity
- Feel of being “boxed in”

Triangle
- Suggests solidity, hierarchy

Million of cats by Wanda Gag
What if...? by Anthony Browne
Madeline by Ludwig Bemelmans
Zoo by Anthony Browne
VISUAL ELEMENT: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- Cultivate children’s taste and appreciation to the variety of artistic styles and media
- Understanding the artist’s techniques and style can enrich our appreciation of the work as adults and help us to make wise book selections for children
WHAT MAKES A GOOD PICTURE BOOK?

~ STORY

❖ Contains a plot that:
  • Is well-structured
  • Builds suspense
  • Builds logically
  • Contains important values
  • Is timeless
  • Is playful and fun

Crow Boy
Taro Yashima
YAS or 895.6 YAS

Little Wayang Kid
Raymond Tan
J SING TNR

Tuesday
David Wiesner
JP WIE
WHAT MAKES A GOOD PICTURE BOOK?
~ CHARACTERS

SOME MEMORABLE AND WELL-DEVELOPED CHARACTERS...

The Very Hungry Caterpillar
Eric Carle
JP CAR
SOME MEMORABLE AND WELL-DEVELOPED CHARACTERS...

The Gruffalo
Julia Donaldson
JP DON
SOME MEMORABLE AND WELL-DEVELOPED CHARACTERS...
SOME MEMORABLE AND WELL-DEVELOPED CHARACTERS…

Spot the Dog series
Eric Hill
JP HIL
SOME MEMORABLE AND WELL-DEVELOPED CHARACTERS...

Green Eggs and Ham
Dr Seuss
JP SEU
WHAT MAKES A GOOD PICTURE BOOK?
~ CHARACTERS

❖ Memorable and Well-Developed Characters
• The central character should be unforgettable
• Characters whom readers care about; characters that become special friends.
• Characters that are convincing and credible with personalities that emerge as interesting and distinctive.
• Behavior of characters should be consistent with their ages and background to create believability
WHAT MAKES A GOOD PICTURE BOOK?  
~ SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STORY~

- **Multiple Levels of Meaning**
  - Books that do not patronize children by pretending that there are simple answers to complex questions
  - Books that provides new insights, allows for variety of responses and challenges one’s thinking and feelings

- **Books that provide an emotional or thought-provoking experience**

*Love You Forever*  
Robert Munsch  
JP MUN

*Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*  
William Steig  
JP STE
WHAT MAKES A GOOD PICTURE BOOK?

- **Good writing and language**
  - Well constructed sentences
  - Effective use of dialogue
  - Language used is (positively) memorable

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**Extracted from Wemberly Worried by Kevin Henkes**

Wemberly worried about everything.
Big things. Little things, and things in between.
Wemberly worried in the morning.
She worried at night.
And she worried throughout the day
“You worry too much,” said her mother
“When you worry, I worry,” said her father.
“Worry, worry, worry,” said her grandmother.
“Too much worry”
WHAT MAKES A GOOD PICTURE BOOK?

❖ Good use of different techniques

Foreshadowing technique: Pictorial and Textual

Images extracted from Where the Wild Things Are
WHAT MAKES A GOOD PICTURE BOOK?

❖ Good use of different techniques

Cliffhanger technique

We're going on a bear hunt.
We're going to catch a big one.
What a beautiful day!
We're not scared.

Uh-uh! Grass!
Long wavy grass.
We can't go over it.
We can't go under it.

Oh no!
We've got to go through it!
WHAT MAKES A GOOD PICTURE BOOK?  
~ RESPONSES OF CHILDREN

- Popular appeal
  - Must appeal to children
  - Must appeal to “child” within the adult
  - Books that people turn to again and again

1. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*  
   Eric Carle  
   JP CAR

2. *Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*  
   Mo Willems  
   JP WIL

3. *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons*  
   Eric Litwin  
   JP LIT
SUMMARY: WHAT MAKES A GOOD PICTURE BOOK?

- Pictures (Good use of visual elements that enhance the text, create mood of the story, storytelling qualities)
- A great story (plot)
- Memorable & well developed characters
- Significance of the story
- Good writing and language
- Good use of techniques
- Elicits a positive response from children
References:


THANK YOU