

***Metareading in picturebooks:
The potential of positive images of reading
as a gateway to bibliophilia***

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Abstract

Adults, whether they are parents or educators, are relentlessly concerned with making readers out of children; not only children who can read, but children who love to read.

This dissertation is concerned with looking at whether images of reading in multimodal picturebook narratives offer a supporting platform in creating bibliophiles. In order to do so I will begin by considering theoretical approaches to picturebooks, first in the field of reader response and then in field of ideological content. Building onto this I will then consider two types of picturebooks and how they might support the development of bibliophilia: narratives which include incidental images of reading, and narratives which focus on reading and convey it as a transformative act, before considering the potential limitations of their influence through issues of content and access. Finally when drawing my findings together, I will argue that incidental images of reading have a more influential, long-lasting effect than transformative narratives.

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Introduction

“You can’t make someone read. Just like you can’t make them fall in love, or dream” (13). This is how Daniel Pennac opens his manifesto for developing a love of reading in children, *The Rights of the Reader* (2006). Undoubtedly though, with the best of intentions at heart, adults are intent on making readers out of children. The importance of reading to children from an early age has been well documented. According to Jim Trelease, author of *The Read Aloud Handbook* (1982), we read to children for the same reason that we talk to them from infancy: “to reassure, to entertain, to bond, to inform or explain, to arouse curiosity, and to inspire” (6). To him, reading aloud to children allows to “condition the child’s brain to associate reading with pleasure, create background knowledge, provide a reading role model [and] plant the desire to read” (6). Every time we read to a child, “we’re sending a pleasure message to the child’s brain”, conditioning them to associate reading with pleasure (6). Picturebooks facilitate children’s first experiences of literature and they are commercially more popular than ever: sales have grown steadily over the last few years, with a growth of 8.7% in 2014, 7% in 2015, and 8.5 % in 2016 (up to the end of August), and are worth £129m (Onwuemezi 2016) in the UK alone. Furthermore, many claim that we have entered a second Golden Age for illustrated books in terms of the quality of picturebooks published (Burnett 2015, Parrott 2015). Overall, these are prolific times for the picturebook.

It is worth considering at this point what is meant by the term ‘picturebook’. The most readily quoted definition is Barbara Bader’s from *American Picture Books* (1976):

A picture book is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and foremost, an experience for a child. As an art form, it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of turning the page. On its own terms its possibilities are limitless.

(Quoted in Arizpe & Styles 2003: 19)

Bader points out the unique qualities of picturebooks: its status as both an art form and the first literature form encountered in childhood, its multimodal nature, its specific audience, as well as its importance not only as a product of its time and culture in terms of ideology, but also as a commercial item. These observations are important when looking at books that showcase positive images of reading; by promoting reading, they promote themselves, and therefore the commercial aspect can certainly not be ignored or underestimated, and I will examine this later on. Bader's emphasis that the picturebook is first and foremost an "experience for the child" hints that reading a picturebook is not a passive activity.

A mention must be made on the issue of spelling of the term picturebook. Bader, as well as many other academics, choose 'picture book' (therefore some direct quotations will use this form), while others, including myself, prefer the compound version of the term: 'picturebook'. The reasoning behind the compound term is, according to David Lewis (2001), to "reflect the compound nature of the artefact" (xiv), that text and artwork are equally important in its study, and that they should be examined and considered as a whole.

Picturebooks are often dismissed as inconsequential and described as mere "vehicles of childish entertainment" (Arizpe and Styles 2003: 21), with many parents feeling the pressure of supporting their children's progress in education by encouraging them to move on chapter books as soon as they are able to decode text, because they can

do “better than this” (Bosman 2010). Academics however have long been able to prove their all-mighty power; despite appearing to be the “coziest and most gentle of genres”, the picturebook “produces the greatest social and aesthetic tensions in the whole field of children’s literature” (Sheila Eggoff, quoted in Salisbury and Styles 2012: 74).

There is a longstanding tradition of visual expressions of thought as being transformative, with Sylvia Pantaleo and Lawrence Sipe (2008) highlighting the example of the Christian Church using illustrated texts to propagate the Christian message to overwhelmingly illiterate audiences in the Dark Ages (13). Picturebooks follow this tradition, with the ability to carry a message that can change lives. I have vivid memories of images from picturebooks I came across as a child, and therefore can relate to SF Said (2015)’s statement that “books for young readers have the deepest impact of all. They’re the books that shape us and stay with us forever”, which is also emphasised by Neil Gaiman (2013)’s description of the importance of reading in a character’s childhood: “Growing up, I took so many cues from books. They taught me most of what I knew about what people did, about how to behave. They were my teachers and my advisors” (101). This is a powerful statement, and it highlights that the potential for images of reading to influence comportment is very tangible.

This study builds on this statement to focus on whether positive representations of reading and book-sharing in picturebooks influence future readers’ attitude towards reading. Do positive images of reading in picturebooks have a transformative effect, impacting children’s behaviour? Having collected picturebooks which focus on the power of reading and libraries for many years, it became obvious when looking back on those titles that many were narratives in which reading was conveyed as an activity leading to a

development in agency for the character, with acts of reading being “explicitly linked to personal development and triumph of adversity” (Hateley 2013: 2). Reading is conveyed in these narratives as a transformative act; but is it enough to persuade readers to become lifelong bibliophiles? This question encouraged me to think further into representations of books and reading and how children might respond to seeing the act of reading visualised in picturebooks, a sort of “metareading” as Erica Hateley (2) describes it. Metareading refers to reading about books, reading and readers in the act of reading; in the case of visual texts it is also ‘watching’ people read. According to her, books which are about reading and readers, unlike metafictional books which are for readers to self-reflect about reading, can simply aim to “produce readers that take for granted the value of reading” (3), readers who have a “great or excessive love of books”, as the Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines bibliophilia. Taking for granted the value of reading therefore indirectly implies that these readers will enjoy reading for pleasure. There have been many terms which attempt to define what reading for pleasure is; Victor Nell (1988) offers an interesting definition by defining reading for pleasure as a “form of play” which “absorbs the player completely” (7), and proposed the term ludic reading, because it emphasises that “it is at root a play activity ... pursued for its own sake” (7). Based on this, my focus is on picturebooks which show reading outside of the school environment, so as to concentrate purely on ludic reading, on learning to love books rather than learning to read. Following on from this idea I also want to focus on preliterate children, therefore those who have not entered school and begun formal reading instruction. This is particularly important for two reasons; firstly, most pre-literacy experiences with books include the involvement of a co-reader who will read the story to the child. There has been a lot of research done about how this affects children’s future literacy levels, for instance the use of the ‘pointing and naming’ game in early experiences which “functions as a

vocabulary acquisition device” (Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer 2013: 146).

Secondly, though the development of textual literacy is central to the development of a love of reading, learning to read can be a distressing experience and children who struggle with the acquisition of literacy might struggle to enjoy reading. It is therefore vital that a positive attitude towards books is embedded before this happens. Thus this study concerns itself with whether early metareading experiences affect the child’s identity as a reader.

As well as those narratives that specifically focus on reading, it seems evident that there will be instances where reading will be portrayed incidentally, in narratives which do not focus on reading, with the act of reading possibly not even mentioned in the text, but simply in the illustrations for children to witness. This highlights the importance of the facilitator; as I have mentioned previously I have purchased many of these books over the years and went on to read them to my children. I bought them specifically for their topic and made a probably unconscious choice to read them to my children because of the topic. Perhaps this was a didactic decision on my part, their main book facilitator (I use the term facilitator as the adult who provides books and who might not necessarily be the same person as the co-reader). Interestingly, Virginia Lowe (2007) ponders whether children are attracted to certain books because of latent interests which will develop later, or whether books indeed influence later behaviour (16). By considering incidental images of reading in this study, I aim to highlight their potential impact, specifically because they might go unnoticed by the facilitator, the co-reader and reader at first and therefore might in turn be all the more powerful.

In order to demonstrate the potential of positive images of reading in picturebooks in moulding readers, I will firstly look at the theoretical foundations of how preliterate children acquire knowledge from picturebooks, focussing on the links between cognitive

development and visual literacy. My second chapter will focus on the potential ideological impact of metareading. This will lead me to focus on specific texts which are of interest for the purpose of this study in the two subsequent chapters, looking at incidental images of reading before moving on to narratives focusing on the transformative power of reading. My final chapter will focus on some of the limitations not only of the form itself but also the interference of its mediators and facilitators.

Chapter I:

Reading and learning from picturebooks

According to Gregory Berns, the lead author of a study demonstrating that reading novels changes our brain activity, “stories shape our lives and in some cases help define a person” (Clark 2013). His statement resonates strongly with this research and links to how we, as readers, respond to texts. According to Louise Rosenblatt (1938), text is merely “inkspots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols” (25). Books are just empty vessels until they are ‘experienced’ by their readers, who bring meaning to texts through previously acquired knowledge but also ‘realize’ the texts, creating meaning as they read them. This is a key point in this study and before I look into more detail about the potentially transformative role of positive images of reading in picturebooks, it seems potent to begin with an overview of theory and findings concerning reader response linked to picturebooks, and how narratives are actualised by preliterate children.

As Wolfgang Iser (1974) points out, “the text only takes on life when it is realized” by its reader (274). One can wonder therefore whether the inexperienced reader primarily targeted by picturebooks is suitably equipped to allow this realization. Researching how reading makes us feel can be notoriously difficult; indeed Margaret Mackey (2016) warns that “some aspects of reading can be only be observed from inside” (9), describing how her own research in others’ reading memory has left her frustrated that she could only see the tip of the iceberg, and that “much greater complexity exists under the surface” (9). Mackey talks about her experience with adults, and this problem will be emphasised

greatly when working with preliterate children who cannot necessarily appropriately verbalise how they feel. Martin Salisbury and Morag Styles (2012) also highlight that “some aspects of a visual experience cannot be conveyed verbally” (80). Finding out how preliterate children feel about reading picturebooks is therefore complex and though such studies exist, they have their limitations. One such type is parent diaries, recorded in a home setting, which Margaret Meek refers to as “naturalistic evidence” (in Lowe 2007: xi); others include research done within a specific context and often an academic purpose, such as Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles’ *Children Reading Pictures* (2003), a ground-breaking research in the field as well as in the theory behind response and which I will be referring to again. Because of the challenges generated by the limited articulacy of the subjects, such studies involve direct participation from adults, with them taking the role of facilitator and recorder, which causes limitations. They include the influence of the socio-economic background of co-readers (Crago 1985: 101), inaccuracy in recording (Lowe 2013: 60), and generalisation of findings (Nodelman 2010: 1). The input of the co-reader and researcher cannot be underestimated, because they might almost work “consciously or more often, unconsciously, to have children agree with their own reading methodologies, and their own interpretations” (Nodelman 2010: 15-16). Each child is unique in his response and rate of development, as Lev Vygostky established with his zone of proximal development, which I will discuss later; so while these studies offer some sense of children’s response to reading picturebooks, they can only be considered as a window into how children *might* respond.

Theorists on response to picturebooks, regardless of their approach, are in agreement that even very young children grasp some meaning from the books that are read to them. What is of interest to me here is how children are able not only to decode meaning from picturebooks but also whether they are able to transfer what they are

learning from picturebooks to inform their future behaviour. Two interlinked theories need to be broached in order to understand how this might happen: the cognitive development of children, and how they apply visual literacy.

Much research into visual meaning-making has linked how children learn to access individual pictures within their cognitive abilities; according to Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Jörg Meibauer (2013), by “‘cognitive’ development, we understand development related to language, thinking, emotion, and vision”(144). Much of the theory around cognitive development focusses on the concept of schemata, which Richard Sinatra (1986) defines as “a mental image or a pattern of action, [which] becomes a way of organizing all of the child’s previous sensory-motor experiences” (9). As Margaret Meek (1982) points out, children’s “natural exploratory is play; their early thinking is action” (7). Children learn to build their own schemata, their own personality, through experience and through “interacting with the environment and by constructing mental schema of how the natural world operates” (Sinatra 7). ‘Reading’, particularly below the age of two, is not different from playing and other interactions with adults according to J.A. Appleyard (1991: 49); the experience is simply committed to the subconscious in the same way and consequently helps create schemata. Children learn from listening to stories and looking at illustrations in the same way that they would from play; Appleyard even refers to this phase of reader response development as ‘reader as player’. Sinatra states that “what is comprehended during reading and listening integrates in some conceptual way with what already exists in the mind of the learner beforehand” (23). Looking at positive images of reading therefore will connect previous experiences of reading and seeing others reading with what is being portrayed on the page, creating a ‘positive’ schemata.

Language is vital in this process, which Vygotsky emphasises as playing “an indispensable role in mediating internal thought processes such as the ability to reason and reflect” (Arizpe and Styles 30). Language implies interaction and this is significant when looking at the role of picturebooks in cognitive development for preliterate children, as language is present in the form of the co-reader bringing the text to life, as well as the conversations between child and adult that go alongside it. Arizpe and Styles also highlight that according to Vygotsky, children’s development is linked to their cultural experience and that “perception, action and speech are inseparable and necessary to the acquisition of knowledge” (31). According to him, children have a zone of proximal development (ZPD) which can be described as an area of potential learning, the distance between “actual developmental level” and “the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, quoted in Holzman 2009: 27-28). This more capable peer, or “expert” (Holzman 28) is the adult who supports the “novice” child in his learning, and here, his interactions with books. However, the notion of ZPD also accepts that each child will be unique in its development and starting point, because “children’s past histories are of considerable importance to them as ways of constructing meaning” (Arizpe and Styles 153) and therefore schemata. Jerome Bruner’s theory of scaffolding highlights this also, according to him, “the formation of concepts can be accelerated by ‘scaffolding’, particularly through the use of mediated language as the more experienced inducts the less experienced learner into understanding” (Arizpe and Styles 31). Bruner’s theory is based on observations he conducted with Anat Ninio (1976) during which they studied interactions between a mother and her child during storytime, using one book over a period of time with the intent of studying how joint-attention reading encourages “scaffolding dialogue” (3) between them, with each reading of the book adding a new

layer of meaning. Bruner and Ninio's work showed that "there is routine give and take between mother and child as they speak to one another regarding the book's contents" and that as the child grows and develops cognitively so does this interactive interaction (DeBruin-Parecki 1999: 3-4). Lawrence Sipe (1998a) states that with each new reading of a picturebook, "we assimilate new information and in the process we change our cognitive structures, accommodating them to the new information" (106), highlighting this gradual building of meaning. As children in preschool years develop at a faster rate than in their later years, cognitively and physically, acquiring new skills and experiences daily, rereading allows them to readjust the links between what they know and what they see. The connection between reader and book is therefore constant, and two-way: children learn from what is read to them, but also deepen the meaning of what is read to them through what they already know, because, as Sinatra states, the constructive nature of the thought process allows visual information, when presented to the brain, to be "modified and interpreted in light of what information already exists there" (5). To Iser (1974), reading can be characterized as "a sort of kaleidoscope of perspectives, preintentions, recollections" (54) and therefore the possibilities of what a reader retrieves from a reading are also endless. Therefore "there are (at least potentially) as many experiences as there are readers" (Fish 1980: 4) and for picturebooks, as there are readings.

Such theories on cognitive development "underlie our understanding of how children learn to think" (Arizpe and Styles 30), and are therefore potent in the study of preliterate children's response to picturebooks. If preliterate children are able to extract meaning from picturebooks to build on schemata in the same way that they do with play and other experiences, one must therefore wonder how they are able to do so, and how picturebooks enable it. These findings show that a vital part of building schemata and learning through picturebooks is therefore facilitated by the co-reader who shares the book

with the child. The importance of these interactions is highlighted by Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer who state that the “developmental process specific for picturebooks are embedded into a special learning situation”: joint-attention reading of picturebooks (2013: 145). Joint-attention refers to the sharing of attention by focussing on the same object; when a co-reader and child are sharing a book, the child focuses on the words read by the adult and the images they relate to. Ellen Handler Spitz (1999) prefers the term “conversational reading”, defined as the “interactive participation of adults in children’s cultural experience” (xiv). The implications of this partnership, as well as the sociological starting point of the child, cannot be undervalued in the delivery of ideological messages of reading, as well as in the potentially didactic implications of this relationship, and these will be covered in later chapters.

While access to text is facilitated by the intervention of a co-reader reading to him, the preliterate child is confronted with the artwork potentially without interference from the onset. According to Sipe (1998a), our tendency when looking at pictures is to “gaze on, dwell upon, or contemplate them” as they create an “atemporal structure” (101). Joseph H. Schwarcz and Chava Schwarcz (1991) highlight this also by explaining that looking at a picture presents us with all the information simultaneously, and that as readers we find ourselves “at liberty to pick our way, perceive contents and meaning at our discretions, with no prescribed direction” (4). It is interesting therefore to consider what might happen in the child’s brain when they are read to. Sinatra points out that neuroscientists believe that the right side of the brain is predominant in early years which also happens to be the side of the brain used to decode visual information (6). This gives us a clue as to how images might be processed, but Maria Nikolajeva (2014) offers a more comprehensive account of what might happen in the brain when reading a picturebook by stating that our brain responds to emotional stimuli in two differing ways: a quick “low

path”, which bypasses its rational part and a “more accurate ‘high path’”, where “language is situated” (95). Essentially therefore, though the difference is measured in “fractions of seconds”, information from the image in a book will be processed “a split second quicker than the corresponding verbal statement, even if it is read by an adult while the young reader is looking at the image” (95). To Sinatra, “visual communication is basic to human thought”, our most primitive way of communicating (3), a notion also highlighted by Nikolajeva who claims “visual perception is evolutionarily hard-wired into our brains” (2014: 95). This supports the idea that images, before text, have an impact on children when reading a picturebook, whether they are alone looking at it or being read to by a co-reader. Nikolajeva goes further by asserting that preliterate children are therefore more likely to “trust images more than words, since images are direct and immediate, while words need longer processing” (95). Consequently, though listening and watching will happen simultaneously within joint-attention book sharing, processing happens slightly asynchronously. It is imperative therefore to find out whether children are able to ‘read’ pictures, as the first impact created by illustrations is devoid of the intervention of an experienced reader.

In order to read pictures, to actionize the picturebook, its reader must be able to access its codes. As Bader’s definition of picturebooks establishes, both textual and visual narratives are equally important and work as a tandem, compelling readers to be able to understand both in order to create meaning. Because of the multimodal nature of the picturebook, its implied reader is also an implied viewer, a term coined by Perry Nodelman to define its specific audience. According to him, the intended audience of picturebooks is “young children, who we believe respond more readily to pictures than to words” (1988:1), and in the same way reader response theories talk about a text in terms

of its implied reader, picturebooks have an implied viewer, “someone in possession of the knowledge and methodology of thinking about them that allows an understanding of the picture more or less as its creator intended” (2010: 24). Nodelman believes that picturebook makers use this to great effect, with “apparently superfluous pictorial information” giving meaning “beyond what the text suggests” (1988: 106). Pictures work as a system of signs, with each aspect coming together to convey specific meanings to knowledgeable viewers, who understand, whether consciously or unconsciously, that “lines and colours on a flat page [...] convey ideas of people, places, and things” (2010: 35). Regardless of this, as viewers we will only be able to understand pictures “in terms of the depth and subtlety of the contexts we are able to apply to them” (Nodelman 1988: 106) and we are not free in our response, which is “constrained by the cultural understandings that make the visible world meaningful” (Nodelman 2010: 35-36). The implied viewer is torn between this communal and constraining response and a more personal, purely sensuous and anti-meaningful response (36). As artefacts of our culture, picturebooks construct readers and viewers in a certain way (41), emphasising their inescapable ideological nature. Nodelman touches on a very valid point for this study which I will discuss at length in chapter two.

So how does the implied viewer access pictures? According to Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott (2001), ‘reading’ a picturebook can be represented by a hermeneutic circle (2); hermeneutic analysis “starts with the whole, proceeds to look at details, goes back to the whole with a better understanding and so on” (2). Both text and pictures play a role in this, with the reader turning “from verbal to visual and back again, in an ever-expanding concatenation of understanding” (2). Sipe (1998a) explains this as a never-ending oscillation, with readers adjusting their interpretation “of the pictures in term of the words in terms of the pictures”, and with possibilities of meaning becoming

“inexhaustible” (103). Arizpe and Styles highlight art critic Kenneth Clark’s work on appreciating works of art as significant to the way preliterate children might access illustrations. His approach consists of four phases: impact, the first general impression from the picture; scrutiny, a more careful looking at the picture; recollection, which is when the individual begins to make connections with previous experiences; and finally renewal, where more careful looking allows previously unseen details to come into focus (43). According to Arizpe and Styles, Clark provides an “illuminating framework” (43), with which I agree, particularly because this approach takes into account the preliterate reader being faced with the artwork alone in a way that Nikolajeva and Scott’s does not.

Looking back at Clark’s four stages in terms of picturebook theory, the notion of the first stage, impact, supports Nikolajeva’s statement about the brain processing images first. The first visual impression created by the picturebook maker is therefore crucial in helping to convey meaning; this might be done through a variety of devices which I will investigate in chapters three and four. The second stage, scrutiny, might take place while looking at pictures alone but will also be facilitated by a co-reader during joint-attention reading, for example if the adult is pointing and labelling. This is a crucial but complex stage according to Arizpe and Styles, as looking carefully is not easy (44), yet this is something that young children relish. Clark’s third phase, recollection, allows viewers to connect the picture to their own experience and knowledge (Arizpe and Styles 33), the brain merging new knowledge with what we already know; within the realms of this study, this stage is significant when looking at incidental images of reading, as children might be linking past experiences with those happening on the page, with “memories of personal experience” crowding in as the illustration “intersects with our lives in a text-to-life moment” (Arizpe and Styles 44). Clark’s final stage, renewal, highlights children’s love for rereading stories, a process which has already been emphasised. According to

Nikolajeva and Scott, children intuitively know that each rereading brings better understanding and that is the reason they demand a book to be reread, which allows them to go “more and more deeply into its meaning” (2), while Sipe highlights “rereading will produce ever-new insights as we construct new connections and make modifications of our previous interpretations” (1998a: 106), encouraging the reader to reorganise his own world according to new images. This clear process of scaffolding can be harder to pinpoint as it happens overtime, but is nonetheless an important part of the cognitive processing of transformative narratives: as they acquire new experiences, children will be able to make new inferences when reading the texts. This, for example, might be the case when making inferences within the readerly gap, which I will refer to later on. Clark’s framework is therefore very relevant and I will refer back to it when examining primary texts in chapters three and four.

While Clark’s stages are very useful it is worth noting that response and understanding are not quite the same thing (Nikolajeva 2010: 27) and that the implied viewer of a picturebook must possess some elementary skills in order to reach the stage of meaning-making (28) needed to reach such stages, including understanding the sequential nature of picturebooks, as pictures do not work in isolation (30). Sinatra suggests the coordination between ideas is reflected through that sequence, but he argues that the lack of “go-between” between pictures encourages more inferential interpretations (161). This will be particularly useful when looking at incidental images of reading and their positioning within narratives, and how this might impact interpretation. Nikolajeva makes another interesting point regarding the symbolic meaning of images; to her, though images can be powerful in expressing emotions children cannot yet articulate, this can only ever be effective if they can understand the use of symbolism (2010: 37). One potent

example for this study is the use of animals as central characters, and the symbolic use of threshold in their transformation. I will demonstrate the tools developed by picturebook makers to assist “the reader in understanding the symbolic/non-mimetic meaning of the text” (36), as while images can be powerful in expressing emotions children cannot yet articulate, this can only ever be effective if they can understand the symbolism code of the image (37).

It has been established therefore that being exposed to picturebooks allows children to create new meaning as well as reinforce knowledge from previously acquired experiences, and that those images become “part of the building blocks of their thinking, something to which they will refer in their actions as they grow up” (Roethler 1998: 95). Within this study, I am looking at the lasting influence of picturebooks in encouraging preliterate children to embrace reading as part of their identity. Being able to ‘read’ pictures, to be visually literate allows children to understand multimodal narratives that not only entertain but also support their search for identity through a specific use of plots, relationships, and metaphors (Schwarcz and Schwarcz 84). Being visually literate allows us to develop as thinking beings. According to Karen Raney (1998), visual literacy is “the history of thinking about what images and objects mean, how they are put together, how we respond to or interpret them, how they might function as modes of thought, and how they are seated within the societies which gave rise to them” (38). This is a potent definition, as it comprises aspects of study that I will now take forward, firstly by looking at the ideological dimension of the topic I am looking at, and then taking my argument forward by looking at specific texts and how they are put together to get their point across before concluding by looking at some potential limitations.

Chapter II:

Picturing an ideology of reading

Ideology is “an inevitable, untameable and largely uncontrollable factor in the transaction between books and children” (Hollindale 1988: 10), and according to John Stephens (1992), narrative deprived of ideology is “unthinkable” (8) because children’s literature “belongs firmly within the domain of cultural practices which exist for the purpose of socializing their target audience” (8), which he suggests is “a conscious and deliberate process” (9). Consequently ideology is found in all texts and cannot be separated from the reading experience. This is crucial when looking at picturebooks, because their audience’s personalities and sensitivities are still developing and readers might be seen as easily ‘malleable’, though they are hardly, even at this early stage, ‘blank slates’. Having been born within a specific society and family system, children will be bathed in a specific ideological thinking system from birth. While Stephens does not reject that picturebooks can “exist for fun”, he insists they can nonetheless never exist without “either a socializing or educational intention, or [...] a specific orientation towards one reality constructed by the society that produces them” (158). Illustrations can indeed “powerfully inscribe both explicit and implicit ideologies” (162). According to Caroline Bagelman (2015), picturebooks are never ideology-free because they are pedagogical “artistic vehicles of meaning” (30) whether consciously meant by their creator or not. This is particularly significant here; when looking at picturebooks that showcase books and reading in a positive light, there is an obvious ideological game at play that can be seen as potentially didactic also, because reading is showcased as the

'right' thing to do. This is a point Bagelman recognizes when she identifies several ideological elements connected to the picturebook form which determine it as a potentially transformative tool (31); not all is significant here, but she includes some effective arguments and I shall use some of her points to investigate further the transformative potential of the picturebooks studied within the realms of this study, including the dialogical nature of its reading experience and the readerly gap.

The notion of the readerly gap is central to the way modern picturebooks work and convey meaning. This concept was first brought to attention by Iser (1978), as the narrative gap. According to him, bridging these gaps in the narration is where the real communication between text and reader begins. The gaps are "a kind of pivot on which the whole text-reader relationship revolves", with those blanks in the narrative structure allowing "the process of ideation to be performed by the reader on terms set by the text" (169). Picturebooks, because they are multimodal, work slightly differently. The gap is, according to Victor Watson and Morag Styles (1996), an "imaginative space between the words and the pictures, or the mysterious syntax of the pictures themselves, or between the shifting perspectives and untrusty voices of the narratives" (2), while Bagelman highlights that a picturebook is "more than the sum of its parts because both images and words take on a new life in being combined" (35). These gaps can appear from one illustration to the next within a page opening, but a significant device in creating gaps is the page turn, which Bader refers to in her definition as "the drama of turning the page".

According to Sipe (2001), page turns "have a complex semiotic significance because they have been carefully planned" (38). He adds that picturebook makers

can use this “brief hiatus in various meaningful ways” (38). This creates many opportunities for meaning-making from the reader, who is trying to “close the gap” (Beauvais 2015: 6), making connections, creating meaning, linking it to previous experiences and indeed taking it in to part form of new schemata. Not all page breaks will be significant of course, with some gaps smaller to fill while others provide “an opportunity to imagine, infer, speculate, and construct alternative interpretations” (Sipe and Brightman 2009: 75). I will focus more on the importance of this sequential nature of picturebooks in chapter three but it is also important to consider its ideological purpose. As established earlier, whatever happens in the head of the reader is unpredictable and indeterminate (Beauvais 6); yet it does not mean that they cannot be channelled. Clémentine Beauvais argues that readerly gaps are not in fact the “interpretive sinkholes in which right and wrong disappear” (5) and where the reader takes control, as many scholars believe. On the contrary, Beauvais suggests that though the readerly gap might be where “prescriptions become deformed by an opening whirlpool of readerly interpretation”, the “collapse is firmly contained within the pedagogical project of the picturebook” (6). Careful planning from picturebook makers leads readers towards creating specific meanings. Response remains contained “within gaps that are adult-orchestrated”, with ideology being gently pushed “everywhere around the gaps, towards certain interpretations” (6). This is also highlighted by Cynthia Lewis (2000) who states that “interpretation itself is a social act” and social conditions “shape the stances readers take up as they interpret and respond to literature” (258). Therefore the readerly gap is a powerful ideological tool in picturebooks; it allows readers to create their own meaning, but within a gated interpretative area, allowing picturebook makers to “channel the child reader into a fruitful line of reflection” (Beauvais 7). The ideological stance of

transformative narratives is therefore enhanced by its readerly gaps. A clear example of this can be found in *A Cultivated Wolf* (1998) by Becky Bloom and Pascal Biet, in the way the Wolf is portrayed to be entering the farm, and how it gradually changes as he learns to read:

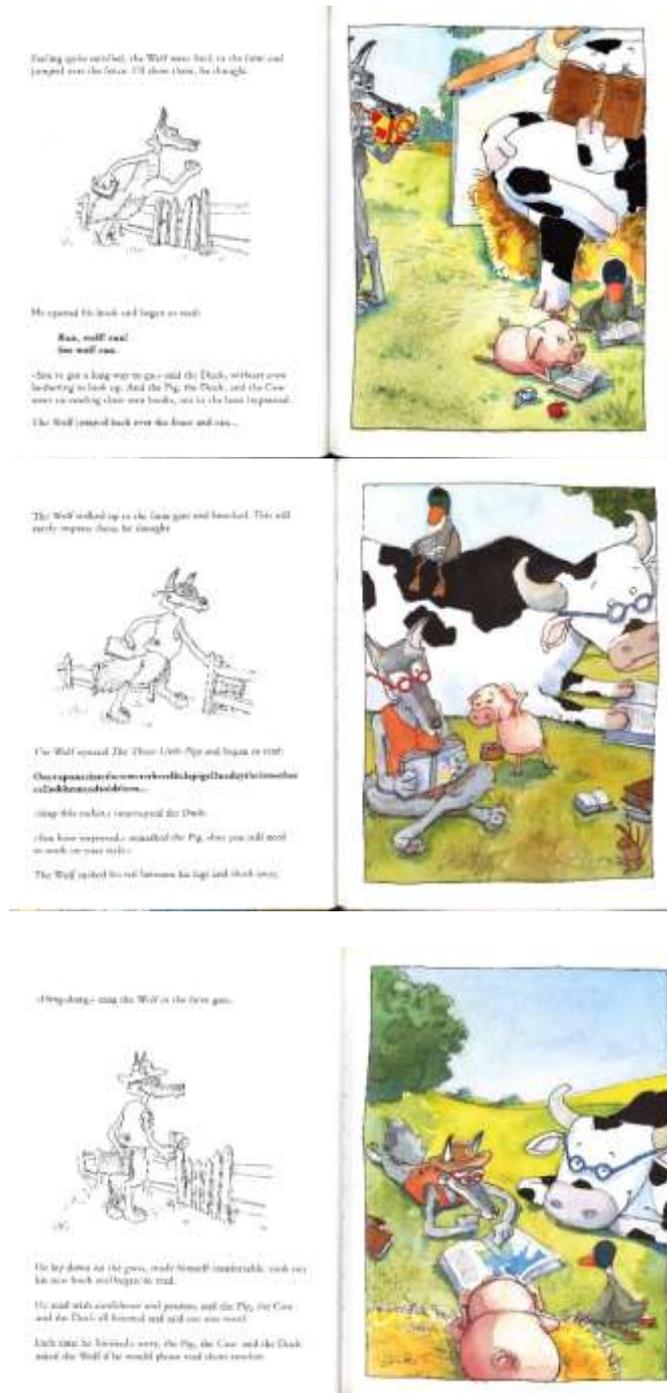


Figure 2.1

The use of black and white sketches on the left as opposed to the full colour illustrations on the right creates a split focus on the Wolf's attempt at reading (right plate in colour) and what happens just beforehand (left plate in black and white). Interestingly, Margaret Meek (1988) states that the reader's eye naturally goes to the left first (9) and it is on these pages that the "opening whirlpool of readerly interpretation" (Beauvais 6) is situated. In this example, readers are encouraged to interpret that becoming a reader is not only humanizing the Wolf, as he now wears clothes and glasses, but also renders him more well-mannered, as he goes from jumping the gate to ringing the bell and waiting to be invited in. This underlying message of the transformative power of reading is in line with the ideological message of the book. Beauvais, however, states that while the child is never entirely free of the picturebooks maker's intent, because the message is "entirely on the adult's side of the children's picturebook", meaning-making within the readerly gap creates agency, and acting upon it "is the domain of the child reader" (7). Therefore it is still up to the reader to act upon the message, and embrace reading. In this case, the reader must activate his schemata of acting and dressing according to social conventions as a signal for the Wolf becoming a 'better' person. This aspect of reading the image, making inferences and applying it to the real world is described by Virginia Lowe (2007) as "causation" (58), which she witnessed as happening to her own children around age four. The co-reader will assist causation in conversational reading, mediating the experience for the child (Appleyard 22).

that tells us a story aloud is always more than a carrier wave bringing us the meaning” (67), which Spitz also notes by describing her mother as having two voices: a “hurry-up” voice for instructions, and another one for reading, with “the capacity to transport me to faraway times and place, to send tremors through my spine” (1). The significance of picturebooks being primarily aimed at a preliterate audience and therefore needing to be read aloud cannot be underestimated, even more so in the context of looking at the role of the co-reader in creating future readers. Spitz emphasises this when she talks about “the added power of the context of children’s cultural lives - the crucial role of parents, teachers, other adults, and older siblings as mediators” (2) and its importance for children when attempting to make sense of visual imagery. The co-reader is a mediator and his influence is fundamental for two reasons. Firstly, because preliterate children’s attitudes towards reading rely on vicarious experiences of reading and their attitudes can only improve in “an environment in which reading is positively modelled by adults and interesting books are read aloud” (Baker, Scher and Mackler 1997: 70). Mediators are here to model positive behaviour. This is crucial, because children “who know adults who read for pleasure take it for granted that is reading is worthwhile” (71). Making sure children can see adults read is an ideological act in itself. In their 2004 study of how older children learnt to love reading, Linda Stronmen and Barbara Mates highlighted that what separated readers and non-readers was the importance recreational reading was given in their family life (194). Secondly, the dialogical transactions that happen during storytime are critical. According to Bagelman, by reading aloud “the written text is voiced, images are deconstructed, textual gaps are navigated dialogically and extra-textual conversation unfolds between the readers” (37). Conversational reading is intrinsic to picturebook experiences for preliterate readers, and the togetherness and closeness of co-reading allows children to “sound out emotion and actions pictured and take control of interpretive

routes” (Heath 2015: 123) in a safe environment. Sinatra notes that “the spoken or written text provides cues and directives for listeners and readers as to how they should construct intended meaning by using their own, previously acquired knowledge” (23) and so by presenting books which feature narratives around the joys of reading or incidental images of reading, such images will affect the child because they can connect it to previous experiences. Relatable positive experiences of reading will be linked to the mediators, therefore highlighting the importance of creating a positive reading experience from early on. This is will be emphasised greatly by images which mirror the experience simultaneously happening to the child. For example, a cosy scene of nightly book-sharing, when being read to at bedtime, will not only reinforce the idea of the experience as pleasurable, but also that it is the ‘right’ thing to do for a parent. The scene from *Goodnight World* (2016) by Debi Gliori (figure 2.2) reflects this, with the dark outside reflected both in the background and the window pane, while the window frames the cosy reading scene, conveying it as opposite to the darkening outside.

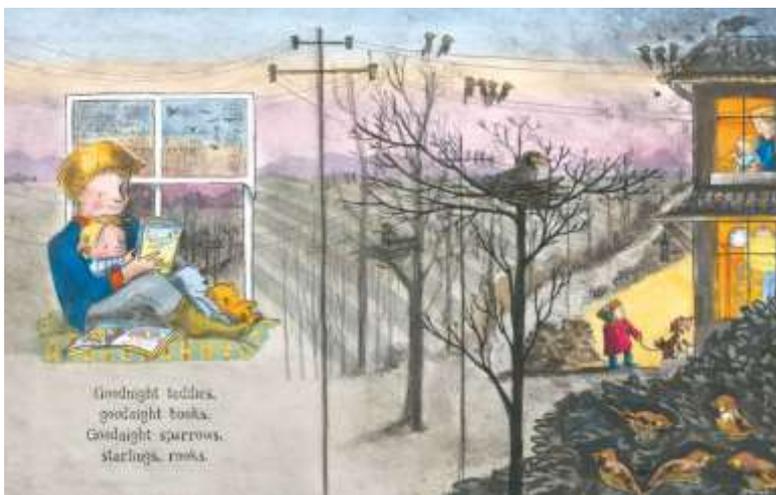


Figure 2.2

It is easy to see therefore how crucial the dialogical nature of preliterate readers' experiences is: talking about pictures as they read the book, pointing out specific features and referring to the child's own experiences will highlight, consciously or not, specific aspects of the multimodal narrative. This can happen both when reading transformative narratives or picturebooks with incidental images of reading; a mediator might point out that they and the child are reading just as the baby and his dad are. Though each book has an 'implied' reader, picturebook makers cannot control how the 'real' reader, the child who will hold the book in his hands, will respond to the text. The mediator further complicates this relation between text and implied reader/viewer. According to Nodelman (2000), the influence of the mediator can be such that it can attempt to influence the real viewer to resemble an implied one (25). The mediator, a more experienced and knowledgeable reader, will prod response by asking questions about the illustrations which allows real readers "to make sense of them in the terms the illustrator intended" (26). This interference between picturebook and real reader encourages readers to become the viewers that the text imply (26). As Robert Hale (1992) notes therefore, "regardless of author's intent ... what comes across to the child can depend upon the slant given by whoever is doing the reading" (113). Hugh Crago also emphasizes this through the influence of "positive feedback loop" (1985: 101); taste and sensitivity affects the way the mediator performs the story when reading, which "elicits a pattern of response from the child listener in which the child's perceptions are focussed and the child's enthusiasm is maximized" (101). This, in turn, feeds into the way the mediator performs. While Crago emphasises he does not imply that the child's response is simply modelled on the adult's, he wishes to highlight that we cannot take response as solely coming from the child (101). There is almost a form of indirect didacticism at play, because the parent's beliefs are

transferred within this interaction.

Ideology in picturebooks can be subdivided into two specific types, active and passive, which mirror the two types of images I am investigating. An active, or surface ideology is the explicit moral belief of the picturebook maker, and is the most conspicuous. Narratives that focus on the pleasures of reading are active ideologies because their ideological content is “conscious, deliberate and in some measure ‘pointed’” (Hollindale 1988: 11) and promote a specific behaviour, the positive effects of becoming a reader and bibliophile in this case, openly (Kid You Not 2012). This ideology will be obvious in the text and the artwork; consequently it is unlikely that negative attitudes towards reading will be portrayed, and this will be covered in chapter five when looking at limitations of the form. For example, the book-stealing creature in Helen and Thomas Docherty’s *The Snatchabook* (2013) must change at the end, not only because stealing is wrong, but also because his actions prevent others from taking part in the communal reading experience. Such ideological themes are easy to spot and might be mentioned in conversational reading.

Narratives which focus on different themes but happen to include images of reading relate to passive ideology. These images are part of a sequential narrative which will most likely have nothing to do with reading. Passive ideology is more covert and is portrayed as part of the ordinary; the picturebook maker isn’t consciously conveying a particular ideology (Stace 2014), and they include values that are “taken for granted by the writer”. Consequently “children, unless they are helped to notice what is there, will take them for granted too” (Hollindale 1988: 13). According to the Kid You Not podcast, even though picturebook makers might not actively be promoting reading in such instances, nonetheless “they show it, they normalise it, they naturalise it”. An example of

this is *My Big Shouting Day!* (2012) by Rebecca Patterson; it is a typical narrative of the terrible twos, with heroine Bella struggling with her emotions and spending the day shouting at everyone. When exhaustion takes over, her mum knows just what to do: a cuddle and a story:



Figure 2.3

Most adults will choose to read *My Big Shouting Day!* because the child being read to is also struggling with tumultuous emotions and the mediator is using the book to help him make sense of it, rather than because of its positive message about reading. However, the passive ideology that reading, and particularly shared reading is a comforting activity is conveyed overtly. This is an interesting aspect of metareading: the child is reading about being comforted from an upsetting situation by stories, which probably mirrors his own position. The importance of the placement of these incidental images of reading within the narrative is of some importance also, which will be described in more detail in chapter three.

Another interesting passive ideological message worth considering is the gender of those doing the reading. Though traditionally one might expect mothers to do most of the

reading, this is not echoed in the books used here, with many fathers included (figure 2.2 for example). One might consider that this is due to changing roles within modern family units, yet Richard Scarry portrayed a reading dad in *What Do People Do All Day?* which was first published in 1968:



Figure 2.4

The ideological stance portrayed here is that reading is not a gendered activity.

The ideology conveyed in such instances is therefore passive and transparent, so “the reader does not even know notice” (Kid You Not); yet if readers are to be faced by such images regularly, these will imprint on their subconscious, particularly at times when they are looking at these alone, are given time to process them at their own pace, as Sipe highlighted (1998a: 101). These images are therefore potentially very powerful, and this can work positively in creating a constructive attitude to reading; yet according to Lynley Stace (2014), “almost no attention has been paid to this aspect of children’s literature”. Throughout this chapter I have demonstrated that picturebooks are strong carriers for ideological meaning and how potent it is for this topic; in the next two chapters I will look

at specific examples of both incidental images of reading and transformative texts to demonstrate how this is concretely conveyed within narratives.

Chapter III:

Incidental metareading

In this chapter, my focus will be on incidental images of reading, and though I am primarily concerned with traditional narratives, I think it is worthwhile also to investigate concept books in this context. Concept books' primary purpose is to teach young children concepts such as colour, shapes, numbers, letters as well as various "prototypical objects from the child's immediate surroundings", the names of which "typically belong to the child's early lexicon" (Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer 2013: 151), therefore providing preliterate children with the knowledge needed to be able to refer to these objects. A sub-category of this is early concept books which are aimed at babies up to eighteen months; they often consist of several pictures and do not necessarily include words. According to Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer (2005), very little has been written about concept books in terms of picturebook theory due to their "lack of narrative structure and static representation of everyday things" (325). In fact, Nikolajeva and Scott simply define them as "picture dictionaries" (6). Yet, concept books for older preliterate children are more complex, showing "objects that belong to conceptual classes or domains" (Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer 2013: 152) such as animals, vehicles, or feelings and do indeed sometimes include these concepts within a sort of narrative format. Peggy Whalen-Levitt (1981) highlights that such books capitalize on young children's love of naming and categorizing objects (22), and have an important role to play before their "interest shifts from the book as catalogue to the book as visual narrative" (22).

In their 2005 article, Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer investigated which objects were included in early concept books, taking a sample of twenty books; only three included a picture of a book (337). This was reinforced in my own sampling of baby books, where I could only find one example of a recently published early concept book which included a book, Stella Baggott's *Baby's Very First Bedtime Book* (2009):

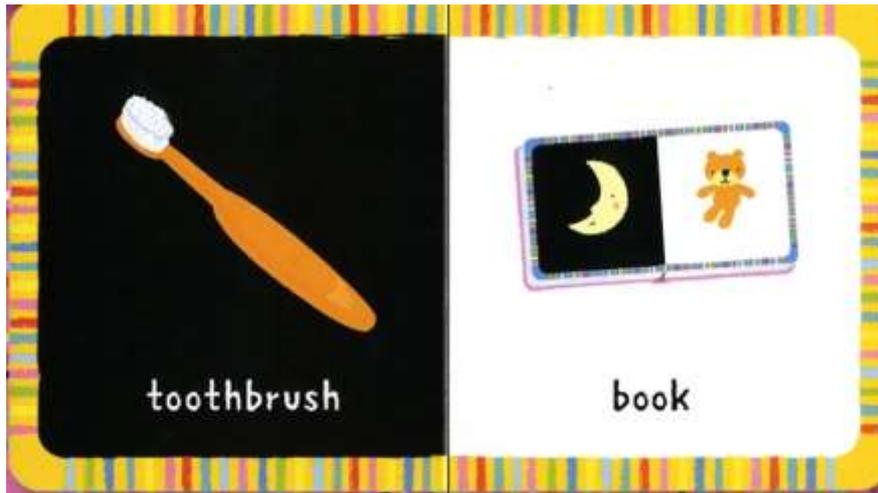


Figure 3.1

This example carries a strong ideological message: this rare occurrence happens to be in a book about bedtime routines, highlighting the cultural convention of bedtime rituals including story-reading, seen as a “valid domestic activity” according to Hateley (3). Interestingly Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer propose that illustrators choose what to showcase according to what “should constitute a prototype to a child” (2005: 337). Picturebook makers have an invested interest in showcasing books as part of early concept books, so that they become part of the child’s consciousness and early lexicon as early on as possible; it seems surprising therefore that images of books are not more readily available.

Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer (2011) emphasise that as children learn mostly from hearing adults talk, and that within joint-attention reading of a concept book,

the situation will be “dominated by a pointing and naming game” (95), where the adult points to an image and might either state what the object is, or ask the child what it is. One could argue that having a physical book in one’s hands is enough, as the adult can ask the child what it is, and therefore that images of books are not needed in this format.

However, research has proven that children can retain and recall information sourced from books from a very early age (Brito, Barr, McIntyre and Simcock 2011) and recalling it also, and therefore it seems a shame that images of books are not more readily included in early concept books, if only to help seal their importance.

More instances of images of reading are found in concept books for slightly older readers however. In such books, while the narrative might seem inconsequential, the organisation of concepts is critical. Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer (2011) point out that in semantics, prototypes are crucial for categorization; they give as an example the fact that a chair will be shown as part of the category ‘furniture’ but a bench will not (95), and highlight that such concepts are portrayed in a way that “is interesting from a child’s point of view” (95). Thus, when books are included in concept books, the category within which they are placed will be important as it might influence the child’s belief as to where books fit into their lives. As Bruner and Goodnow highlight in the introduction of *A Study of Thinking* (1956) “the learning and utilization of categories represents one of the most elementary and general forms of cognition by which man adjusts to his environment” (2). This really emphasises the importance of placement and how it will influence the child cognitively; for example, if books only appear as part of the pages depicting educational environments, children might conclude books are merely for learning. By placing books within the home environment, concept books reiterate the idea that books are a ‘normal’ part of home and everyday life. For example figure 3.2, taken from *Littleland* (2013) by Marion Billet, places books and book-reading very much within the realms of bedtime and

the very special domestic bonding time that happens then. The reader is even encouraged, via the mediator reading the interrogative text, to point out books on the page and interact directly with the short narrative.



Figure 3.2

However, to normalise reading behaviour, it is essential that incidental images of reading should be found within other categories than those linked to bedtime and bedrooms, so as that to emphasise that reading should not be only about bedtime routines, but part of everyday activities. There are fewer occurrences of these in concept books, but examples include Dorothee de Monfreid's *A Day with Dogs* (2016), showing reading at the beach, and Mary Hoffman and Ros Asquith's *The Great Big Book of Families* (2010) which simply shows reading as a hobby:

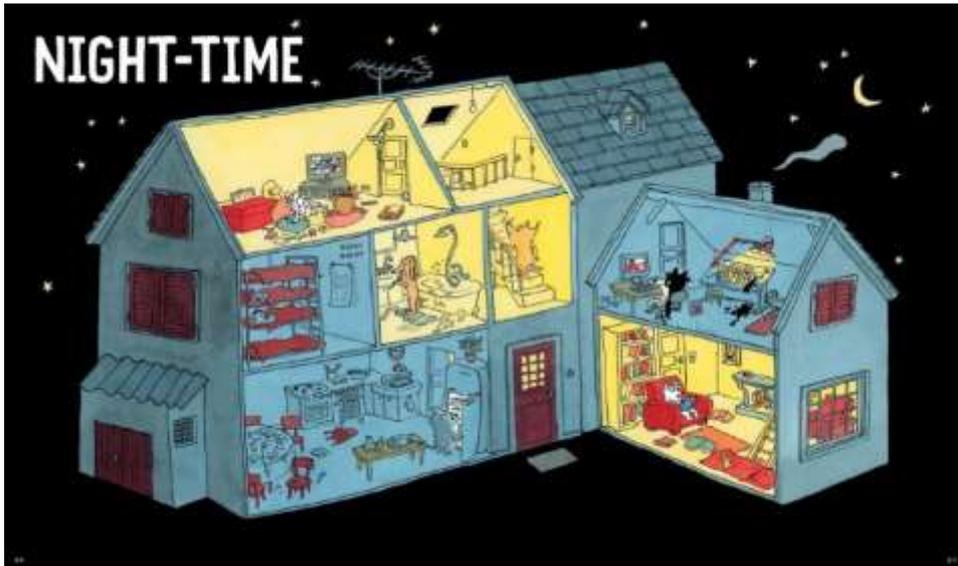


Figure 3.5

The importance of such books therefore cannot be underestimated. Drawing from my own experience, those were the types of books I would leave for my children to browse alone. There was a selection in the car for long journeys, and they were in the house within their reach. When ‘reading’ them, they would partake in extended phases of Clark’s scrutiny phase, poring over the details in each opening. This is a point that Virginia Lowe also emphasises; although she did not believe in pointing and labelling during joint-attention reading because she considered it a form of “coaching” (2007: 12), she concedes that her children “did practice labelling alone”; when they sat alone with a book and pointed to things, “they were labelling for themselves, even before they could say the words” (24). This an interesting point as it illustrates that children do use labelling and pointing as a way of rehearsing language and concepts, a point that is vividly illustrated in the Booktrust video *Bookstart’s Maia Reading Journey* (2009), in which we witness Maia, aged 21 months, looking at a concept book alone and using it as a springboard to rehearse the language describing parts of the body. This is a prime example of Kenneth Clark’s recollection phase: Maia is linking the page with her own experience.

Such experiences are pivotal in the cognitive development of the child, and shows the potential that showing positive images of books and reading might have on building schemata and creating life-long readers, who accept books as a normal part of everyday life. However, it is worth emphasising children learn from first-hand experiences, and concept books “are better used as tools for supplementing and reinforcing direct experiences, not as substitutes for them” (Carlson 1996 :16). Concept books can only strengthen behaviour which children are witnessing first-hand.

Incidental images in concept books are therefore relevant, but I now want to return to images within regular narratives, which are found within all sorts of thematics and at differing stages within narratives. It is important first to consider the uniqueness of the construction of picturebook narratives in order understand their potential impact. More often than not, the text of a picturebook will be written first and then illustrated; even if both are created by the same person, the skeleton of the narrative will primarily be textual. According to Nodelman (1988), most readers look at the illustrations on each opening before they read the words (242). To him illustrations work as a sort of punctuation, because they demand “that we pause before we go on to the words on the next page” (248), forcing us to look at the illustration before we go on with the story, which mirrors Clark’s impact stage. The illustration is telling the reader “Don’t be concerned with what happens next, think about what is happening now, at this moment” (Nodelman 246). Therefore the choice of what is being illustrated and how it is conveyed is never coincidental. The illustrator needs to decide which scenes to illustrate, bearing in mind which scenes are “most significant in terms of contributing to the reader’s understanding of the text and of reinforcing the emotional effect sought by the author” (Edward Hodnett,

quoted in Nodelman 1988: 256), calling on the implied viewer's efferent response, understanding the story, and his aesthetic response, 'feeling' the text.

There are two ways in which an illustrator can include incidental images of reading within a narrative: by 'mirroring' the text which mentions the act of reading and giving it his own interpretation, which Joseph Schwarcz (1982) calls "congruency" (14) of the illustrations and the text, or by including images of reading when they are not mentioned at all in the narrative, which according to Schwarcz is "deviation" of illustrations from the text (16). In both instances, the illustrator finds himself with the power of "elaboration" (Schwarcz 15), to expand freely on information given by the text. Deviation is particularly critical in looking at how the illustrator's interpretation of the text might convey a particularly positive attitude to reading. For example, figure 3.6 is from Nick Sharratt's *My Mum and Dad Make Me Laugh* (1994) which focuses on a family's unusual tastes. Despite there being no mention of reading whatsoever in this particular opening and throughout the book, the mother and son are both pictured reading, and books are scattered in scenes throughout. This provides a great example of incidental images of reading being used to normalise reading for pleasure as part of everyday life: the characters are portrayed sitting in a comfortable position, looking happy, obviously relaxing, sending the message to readers, at an unexpected point in the narrative, that reading is pleasurable.

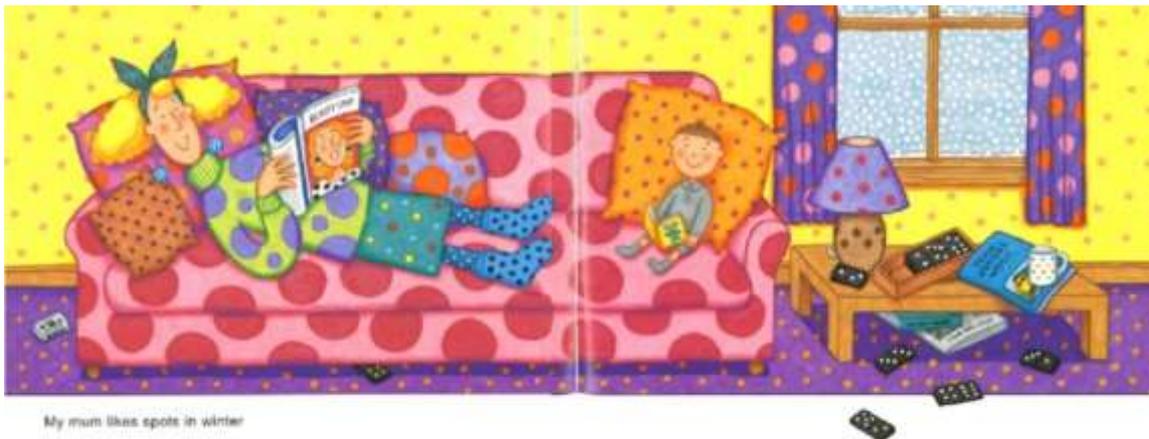


Figure 3.6

Another incidental image of reading which deviates from the text can be found in Anne Kubler's *What Can I See?* (2011), a simple narrative about senses. In an opening focusing on seeing, being able to see "a whole new world" is interpreted as reading books:

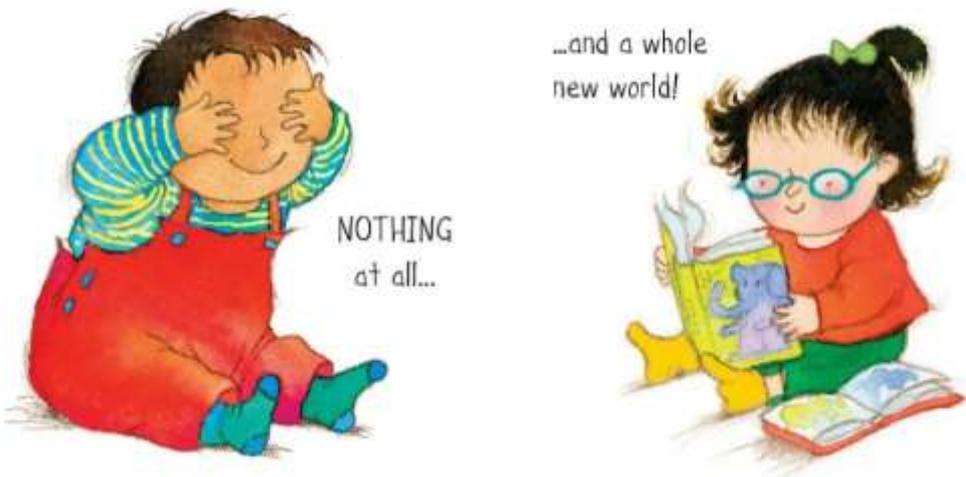


Figure 3.7

In terms of Clark's phases, the impact of the image of reading which deviates from the textual narrative might not actually take full effect on the child until the final stage,

renewal. This is mainly because hearing the text will help them work out what the narrative is about, and they might focus on that at first, before going back and making inferences. However, we cannot underestimate the power of the first impact linked to the asynchronous access to the multimodal narrative, as mentioned in chapter one. In that split second before the text is read and gives a meaning to the picture, the child is first faced with an image of reading, allowing for an aesthetic response to take place.

Though there are many instances of images of reading which appear as a deviation from the text, the majority of incidental images of reading in picturebooks happen to be, quite naturally, images of book sharing within the family, often happening in the bedroom at bedtime, which is, in Western culture, the preferred time for storytelling, as has already been underlined. According to Moebius (1991), “no matter what the book is about, the bedroom betokens the restoration of calm and the absence of confusion or anxiety.” (55). Images of reading are often associated with bedroom scenes with the bed representing “a private space that fully belongs to the child, where the child also has control” (Nikolajeva and Taylor 2011: 147). In such instances, reading is represented as a “valued domestic activity that helps to forge and strengthen family bonds” (Hateley 3). These images help enhance reading as part of the “cultural and social education of a child and helps constitute the child protagonist’s present and future agency” (Hateley 3). Figures 2.2, 2.3 and 3.2 showcase this, as does this illustration from *Meet the Parents* (2014) by Peter Bently and Sarah Ogilvie:



Figure 3.8

The placement of the image within the narrative is itself no coincidence. Illustrations in picturebooks are a serial art form; each has an important role to play within the narrative and cannot be considered independently (Schwarcz and Schwarcz 5). According to Whalen-Levitt, children from age four are more receptive to sequencing, as they do not see pictures in isolation (23), therefore a child's response to a specific image might depend on its placement within the narrative. The left plate, immediately before the image of reading on the right, is all about cuddles, which in Clark's impact stage will allow readers to think of happy experiences straight away. This is the thought they will carry through the gap between this image and the next: a feeling of safety and happiness. As they navigate the gap between the images, preliterate children will connect those feelings with the activity of reading, taking part in Clark's stage of recollection.

Such narratives draw on the symbolism of bedtime as a time for bonding to reiterate the links between shared bedtime reading and close familial bonds, but similarly "connects these ideas with the development of a child as a literate subject" (Hateley 4). According to Patricia Montgomery-Aaron (1986), children attach great significance to parent characters in books, allowing them to "define reality and view the world from a comfortable stance"

(288). Including such images as part of picturebook narratives encourages children to build schemata based on positive relationships and situations.

As I have mentioned in chapter two, the image of shared reading in *My Big Shouting Day* happens after Bella has had a particularly tantrum-filled day (figure 2.3). Her mother uses the opportunity of storytime to calm her down, where “the bed becomes a space where the characters can negotiate and reunite” (Nikolajeva and Taylor 154). The page break is vital here as the opening which includes the image of shared reading follows the opening in which Bella’s tantrum culminates:

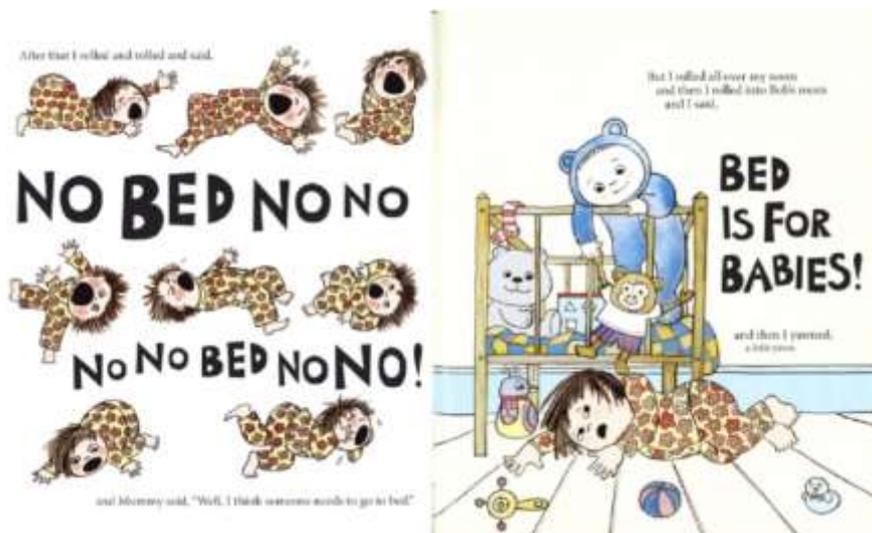


Figure 3.9

According to Lawrence Sipe and Anne Brightman (2009), page breaks are a rich site for “children’s cognitive integration of text and pictures” (75). Here the drama of turning the page is filled with the drama of Bella’s tantrum. The opening that follows (figure 2.3) brings an emotional, calming end to her tumultuous feelings, with Bella’s sudden relaxed state being expressed by her yawning (right plate). Preliterate readers will fill the gap of the page break with previously acquired schemata and emotions, linking reading once again to a comforting state of mind. One can see Kenneth Clark’s framework at play again - first recognising the behaviour, then making inferences with prior experiences, then

consolidating the message each time the story will be reread, which is likely to be often, if the child recognises himself in the narrative and feels a strong bond towards the story.

Shared reading with parents does not seldomly happen as part of unwinding or a bedtime routine however, as figures 3.10 and 3.11 showcase. Yet, the comforting stance remains, expressed by the position and placement of characters. Almost always, the group reading is placed in the centre, usually on a bed, or sitting in an armchair, creating a frame around them, allowing us to focus on them. They are physically surrounded by people, or people's arms, or toys, which create a sense of closeness. Being in the centre of an illustration also creates a position of power and strength (Moebius 1986:154), highlighting the significance of the scene, and the agency that reading brings. In figure 3.8, the added use of the light glow heightens the feeling of warmth but also focuses the attention even more on the scene. Children are often at the centre of such scenes, but not always, as in *Just the Job for Dad* (2014) by Abie Longstaff and Lauren Beard:

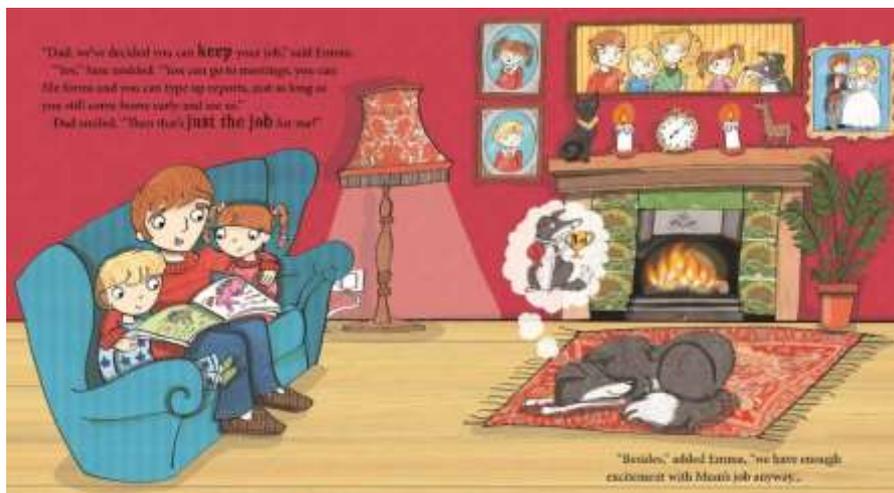


Figure 3.10

The children are brought into central position by the dad's arms around them, making them as one. The following opening from *A Day with Dad* (2008) by Bo R. Holmberg and Eva Eriksson showcases a similar scene. In the story the protagonist has spent the day

with his estranged father, but before he must leave again the little boy takes him to the library. The page turn is important here again because there is no mention as to why the boy chooses the library. Instead, readers are faced with a powerful image of bonding, allowing them to make the connection that the boy sees reading as a way to bring them close. Again the characters are central, framed by a sofa, and their embrace:

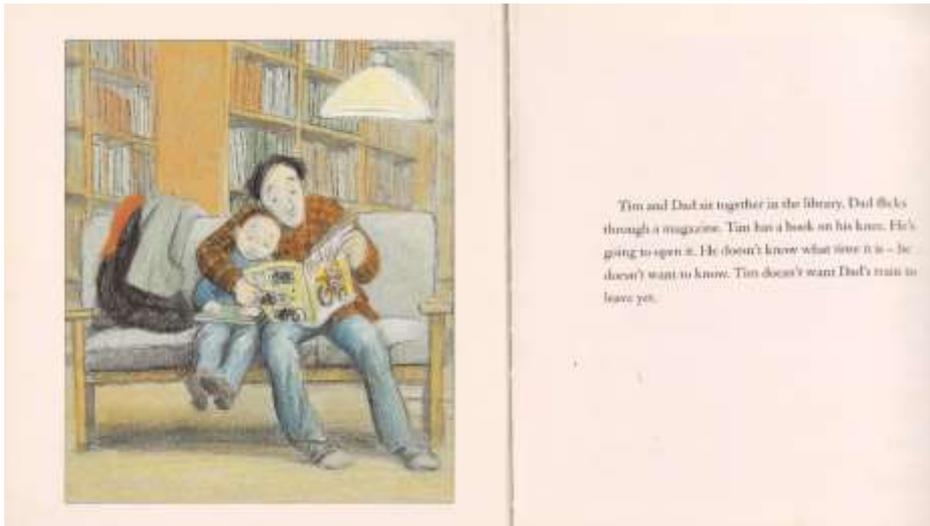


Figure 3.11

These examples convey this idea of comfort, of the familiar, creating links with the experience of reading as such.

Another striking example of how incidental images of reading can convey comfort can be found in Oliver Jeffers' *The Heart and the Bottle* (2010), which tells the story of a girl's relationship with her grandfather and how his death affects her. Both characters are portrayed as knowledge-thirsty and reading is shown as a key part of their relationship (figure 3.12), fuelling conversations that "draw both on imagination and information from books" (Hateley 8), with Jeffers describing it as "all the curiosities in the world" (3):



Figure 3.12

When her grandfather dies, she is stricken and takes many years to get over it. Once she does, she returns to books, and consequently “the chair wasn’t so empty anymore” (30). The chair symbolises the link between the two experiences, a symbol of the familiar and familial, and reading is a crucial part of the relationship between a beloved family member and the child. As Hateley states, *The Heart and the Bottle* focusses on “curiosity, sharing, dialogue (with the world, ideas, and other people), and the reading of books is considered as a crucial example of such” (9).

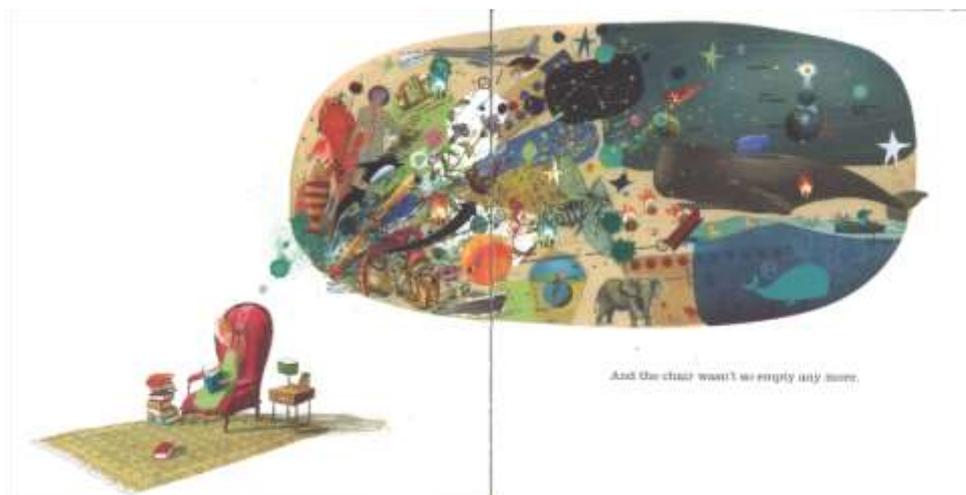


Figure 3.13

The use of negative space symbolises a new beginning, but with her grandfather's chair, rug and books also anchoring her into beloved memories of book-sharing. The use of speech bubbles solely made of illustrations in both openings is also particularly interesting when considering preliterate children. Jeffers attempts, successfully, the difficult task of illustrating of what might happen in one's head when reading. This is most certainly the kind of illustration a child is likely to linger over on their own, but also talk over with their mediator. Interestingly, the act of reading is portrayed as a way of finding out about the world, as is also shown in figure 3.7. Frank Serafini is concerned that many texts portraying readers and reading is often "portrayed as oral performance and correct decoding of individual words, not as readers' ability to make meaning" (2004: 215). *The Heart and the Bottle* shows that while reading together is an important bonding act, something that makes us more receptive and develops us as thinking beings, this act is not necessarily only linked to made-up stories.

Throughout this chapter I have highlighted that incidental images of reading can be powerful vehicles of meaning, creating a positive interpretation of reading not only simply by their inclusion but also by where they can be found within the sequencing of narratives and within specific categories in concept books. By being exposed to these images both alone and as part of joint-attention storytime, preliterate children are given opportunities to see images of reading outside of an active ideological premise and as part of everyday life, allowing them to make inferences with their own experiences. According to Gabrielle Simcock and Judy DeLoache (2008), imitating behaviour seen in books was "significantly higher after four readings of the books than after only two readings" (693); though their study focused on repeated reading from the same books, it seems palpable that repeated exposure to images of reading in picturebooks will have a similar effect.

The following chapter will look at narratives which focus entirely on reading, learning to read and its transformative power.

Chapter IV:

Transformative metareading

Narratives which focus on reading often convey it as a transformative act directly linked to social betterment or bettering oneself. In such narratives, reading allows characters to cross the threshold between a ‘pre-reading’ life and a ‘better’ life with books, socializing them by not only breaking their loneliness but giving them agency and including them into social groups; as Hateley puts it: “reading is a conduit to personal development and social relations” (4). When looking at such narratives, unlike incidental images, it is worth looking at the picturebook as a whole because each part “functions as a sign and has the potential to contribute meaning to the book” (Sipe 2001: 24), which includes the peritext: the elements that surround the text. Kenneth Clark’s framework talks of impact and of course the first impact of a picturebook will be its cover. Moebius states that “skipping the cover and the title page is like arriving at the opera after the overture” (1986: 152). Sipe concurs, stating that all the elements the reader sees before the text begins, namely the cover, the endpapers, the title page “communicate a mood and may give us signals about the thematic thrust of the story” (2001: 24). Looking at a sample of covers from the transformative narratives I am focussing on (figure 4.1), Sipe’s point is vindicated: all show the protagonists reading or sharing a book, which ultimately is the resolution of such stories, and creating the right message from the onset. Once children have had

the stories read to them, they will be able to make new inferences linked to the front cover, mirroring Clark’s fourth stage: renewal.



Figure 4.1

Another important peritextual element worth investigating are the endpapers, which “mediate the reader’s transition to the interior of the book” (Sipe and McGuire 2006: 292), working similarly to the readerly gap within narratives. There are several types of endpapers, but I want to focus on illustrated dissimilar endpapers which “may [...] serve to represent changes that have occurred over the course of the story” (Sipe and McGuire 299), therefore mirroring the transformative element of the narrative; this is illustrated fully in two of the texts, *A Cultivated Wolf* and *Dog Loves Books* (2010) by Louise Yates. In *A Cultivated Wolf*, after failing to scare a group of farm animals who are too engrossed in their reading to even notice him, the Wolf decides to learn to read to see what the fuss is about. Eventually, his newly acquired skill allows him to be welcomed as part of the little group of storytelling animals. This journey is illustrated in the endpapers: the two illustrations are identical in setting but the characters’ stance changes completely (figure

4.2); this has been prompted by the Wolf learning to read: his learning to read and becoming ‘civilized’ has transformed not only himself, but the villagers also, bringing everyone together.



Figure 4.2

The endpapers in *Dog Loves Books* also frame the narrative and convey a transformation, but interestingly, the main protagonist, Dog, is not included. Dog is a book-loving yet lonely character whose obsession with codex inspires him to open a bookshop, which eventually allows him to forge relationships with others. The front endpapers show several portraits of dogs; the back endpapers show the same dogs, engaged in reading:

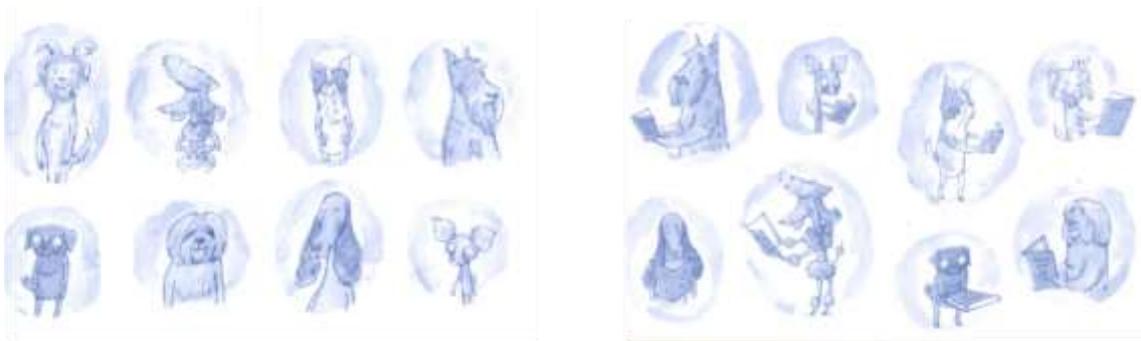


Figure 4.3

This highlights the transformative and socially reciprocal effect of reading: Dog learns to make friends and be accepted, while the other dogs learn to love books.

To Sipe (1998b) endpapers are powerful, “like stage curtains, framing the performance of a play” because they are “the first pages one sees when opening the picturebook and the last pages one sees at the end of the book before closing it” (69). When endpapers are not available, the first and final openings of a narrative can sometimes achieve the same effect, which is the case in *The Snatchabook*, the story of a book-stealing creature learning the error of its ways and the joys of book-sharing. The scenes in its first and final openings (figure 4.4) are almost identical. The first opening shows Eliza reading alone in her bedroom basked in light while the Snatchabook is seen in the top right of the right plate, in the dark and distant from the reader highlighting his lack of status, while the final opening shows the same scene, but with the two protagonists sharing a book with others in the light; I will return to the use of light and dark further on. Similarly to previous examples, these openings frame the narrative, allowing the reader to grasp the transformation but also emphasising that reading does not change just the protagonist but everyone around him, highlight the value of reading to society as a whole.



Figure 4.4

Though Clark’s framework focuses on individual pictures, I think his theory is potent when looking at whole narratives, particularly the stage of renewal. When faced with the front endpaper or first opening at the first reading, readers will know nothing about the

story, but the framing will allow them to make connections and note these on rereading.

I want to focus now on specific devices which help convey the transformative effect of reading, and one that is striking is the use of animals and other creatures that are traditionally considered as other and who use reading and books as a tool towards acceptance. Talking animals are commonplace in children's literature and can take many forms, portraying various degrees of anthropomorphism; some might behave completely like humans, or some might just have the ability to talk. Looking at *The Snatchabook*, the animals still live within their natural habitat, yet speak, go to school and have furniture in their burrows. Anthropomorphism is a long standing tradition in children's literature; Schwarcz resents its excessive use, claiming that animals as heroes are put before children as "likely objects of identification" and that those animal heroes are often "kind of one-dimensional human beings" (9). Research however shows that this is hardly the case; Carolyn Burke and Joby Copenhaver (2004) state that using anthropomorphic characters is clearly a device "to introduce and deal with new and controversial topics" (206) and that when topics are controversial, personal or simply close to our hearts, the use of animals "has long provided intellectual and psychological distance and has allowed us to critically explore that which we would not be comfortable exploring directly" (207). The use of animals as protagonists provides readers with a shield, an emotional distance which allows readers to deal with the situations and emotions presented. That emotional distance, according to Burke and Copenhaver, also allows children and mediators to "become reflective and critical concerning life problems and life choices" (212), with children able to "share the weaknesses and ignorance of the character" but also to allow them to "feel superiority in knowledge and strength to that same character" (Pinsent 1993: 37). However, in the context of this study, it is interesting to consider how it might help

highlight the transformative nature of reading. To Burke and Copenhaver, in books that deal with “issues of deep and lasting cultural significance”, the animal characters are here to “try out roles for us” (212), showing readers what a difference reading makes to one’s life. The creatures start off as illiterate, mirroring preliterate children’s own stance, and the narrative shows us the journey that needs undertaking before becoming a reader, and a bibliophile.

Burke and Copenhaver do however identify some limitations to the use of anthropomorphism; it offers a “buffered engagement with a message of cultural significance” (210), further highlighting that many books dealing with literacy and the reading process use animal characters, making them “as much vehicles for concerned adults to formulate, clarify, and advance their own positions as they are intended to open the debate to young readers” (211). This emphasises the role of the facilitator which I will come back to in chapter five. Interestingly, Nikolajeva and Scott point out that using animals also eradicates several issues in characterisation; age, gender and social status (92) which allows for easier identification. I would disagree that it eradicates social status, looking at some of the texts covered here, and this is down to the species of the characters. When Leonard S. Marcus (1984) asks “does it matter what kinds of animals occur in the stories?” (127), it is obvious from looking at the type of animals that it does indeed matter, particularly in narratives which specifically focus on the transformative effect of reading: wolves, bears and monsters are all creatures which suffer from bad reputations, considered as dangerous, threatening or simply villainous in much of children’s literature. The wolf is overwhelmingly portrayed as a villain in literature; as Hollindale (1999) puts it, “we frighten our children with wolves” (98). Yet the Wolf we meet in *A Cultivated Wolf* as well as the creatures from the other texts are anything but frightening. Instead, they are alone and misunderstood; the only exception is Harry the monster from *Taming Horrible*

Harry (2006) by Lili Chartrand and Rog  , whose raison d’ tre is actually to frighten people, but who loses interest in the job as soon as he discovers books. These characters however, regardless of their nature, are not seen as equal to humans because they must learn to read in order to become so; using such protagonists emphasises this transformation. They are used partly “through the metaphorical subversion” (Ghosh 2015: 221) of their traditional counterparts: threatening, dangerous and this, in turn, helps generate more sympathy for them. They are doubly uncivilized: through their lack of knowledge of books and through their very identity. This opens opportunities for Clark’s third stage of making connections with children’s prior knowledge of such characters, but also their own experience of being on the outside of being literate, and give them a glimpse, a trial run, of what is to come once they learn to read: acceptance into a social world, and happiness.

Another element used by picturebook makers to convey transformation is to demonstrate it in terms of polarized positions, a before and after, with a threshold to be crossed. This is conveyed in a variety of ways which I will now examine.

Going back to wolves, Debra Mitts-Smith (2009) states that they often appear on the outside of something, whether it is at a crossroads or outside a door (59); this represents part of their loneliness and their otherness, which is often also depicted thanks to the location of the story, particularly in opposition to “bucolic settings” which are used as a symbol for peace and order as opposed to the “chaotic freedom of the woods” (61). The wood is used as a symbol for the world that the preliterate child finds himself in; a world of loneliness, possibly chaos which might be used as a metaphor for lack of knowledge, where the pleasures found in communal experiences of reading do not exist. This is conveyed perfectly by the second opening in *A Cultivated Wolf*:

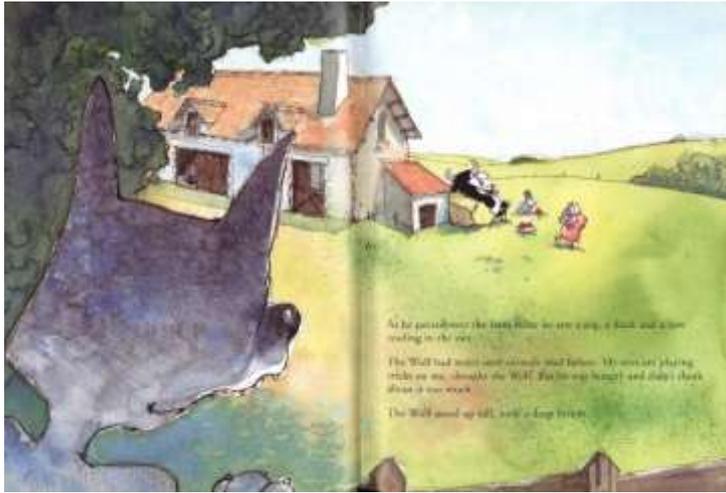


Figure 4.5

The Wolf, even though he has already entered the village in the first opening and has found it a negative experience, chooses to hide behind the trees to spy on the farm animals as they read. The bucolic setting Mitts-Smith mentions is here in all its glory: farm animals, red apples, hay stacks, calm and serenity. It appears in contrast with the Wolf's natural habitat of the wild woods, hiding just behind him and the reader, as we are positioned as watching from behind him. This is identified by Stephens as an ideological position (162); the reader is given the same perspective as the Wolf, feeling the same yearning, yet at the same time looking on to the whole scene, with an extra view that the Wolf does not get. Of course, the Wolf at first is only interested in eating the animals rather than their reading material, which once more highlights his predatory nature and emphasises how much reading will change him, once he chooses to cross that boundary. This threshold between the woods and the civilized reading world is used in other picturebooks also. In both Emma Chichester Clark's *Bears Don't Read* (2014) and *Taming Horrible Henry* (figures 4.6 and 4.7), the civilized world invades the forest, symbolised in both by a book being inadvertently left behind in the forest:



Figure 4.6



Figure 4.7

Neither George nor Harry are lonely, living in communities in the woods. However, they both feel different; George, from the onset, wonders if there is anything else to life while Harry is content at first, but finding the book turns his life upside down. Though they do not actively seek out change, the abandoned books give them an opportunity to challenge the status-quo, offering them a window into what is outside in the ‘reading world’. This can be seen as mirroring preliterate children’s status, held in the status-quo of ‘not reading’, still relying on parents to read to them, and needing to take agency and leave the

comfort of the forest, or the parents' lap, to become readers and therefore gain agency. George's forest is by no means dark or threatening, and in fact is very similar to the bucolic gardens he later finds himself in; the link between the two worlds is conveyed by the same patterns being used in both:



Figure 4.8

The use of frames is used throughout, as in figure 4.6 but also when George decides to leave the forest and go and seek out where the book originates from:

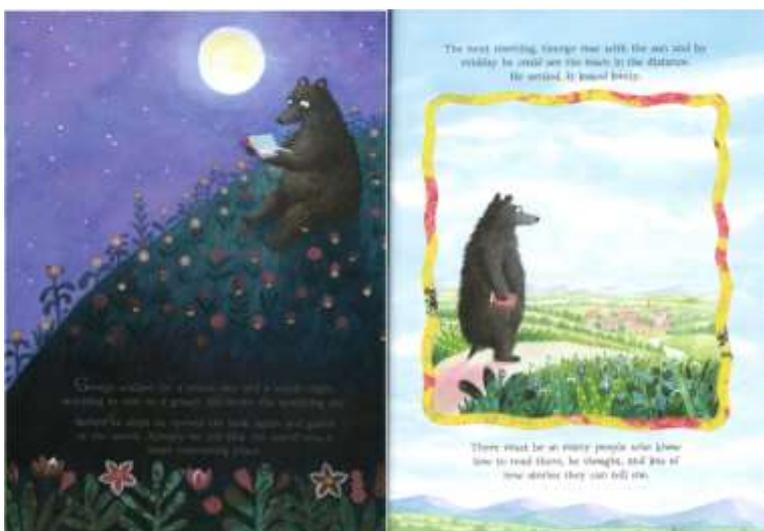


Figure 4.9

The use of frame helps readers to focus on events “marked off for us to look at” (Nodelman 1988: 50), giving us a “‘limited’ glimpse into a world” (Moebius 1986: 50). The contour of the frames are particularly interesting here: in figure 4.6 it is reminiscent of the forest, almost creating a frame which holds him into the space he is in. The pattern used in figure 4.9 is more vibrant, acknowledging the change about to happen and the promise of a new life. It is also the pattern used for the butterflies’ wings, creating another link to freedom, and the pattern used on the tablecloth in the garden, sealing its link with the ‘reading world’. George, unlike some of the other protagonists, does not dramatically change; rather it is the humans’ perception of him that does, but only when he has learnt to read and is therefore deemed civilized.

Unlike George, Horrible Harry never leaves his forest, but just as the book invaded it, so it seems does flora. The change is symbolised at the end of the book by a single stem growing around the trunk of the tree where he originally found the book:

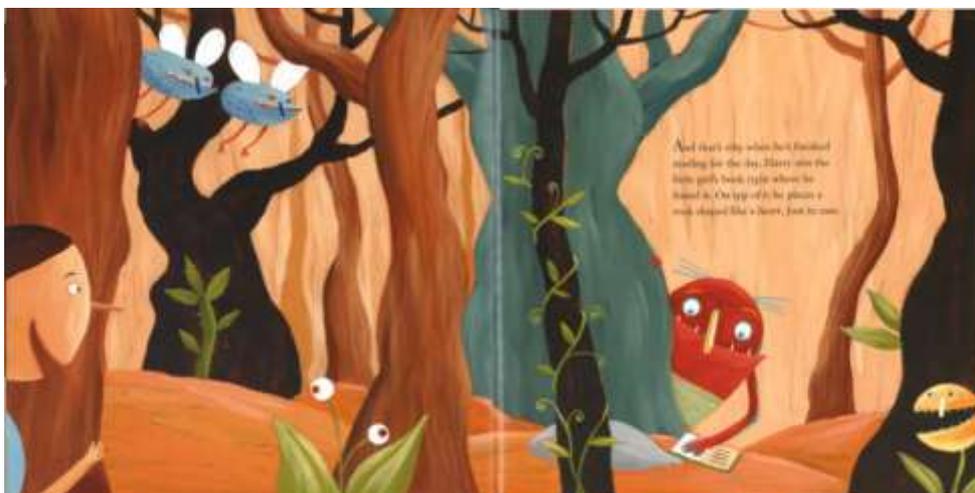


Figure 4.10

This symbolises the crossing of the threshold; the dark forest is now welcoming and blossoming, green shoots being often used as a symbol of hope and new life; it highlights

the change that reading has brought not only to Harry but to the forest community as a whole, as all the monsters eventually catch the reading bug, which changes their behaviour and makes them peaceful.

In these examples therefore, the setting is used to convey the threshold between the pre- and post-literate entity, with the crossing from one to other signalling the transformation.

Another way of expressing this threshold is through the use of colour. This is the case in W.E. Joyce and Joe Bluhm's *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* (2012); throughout the book, there is a contrast between colour and black-and-white, facilitated by the use of digital art, which allows both to be easily superimposed. In the narrative, black and white symbolises life 'without books'; once a character has been introduced to books, they are 'coloured in', a visual metaphor for being enabled. Morris is introduced to us in full-colour, but when he loses his books in a storm, his whole world, including himself, becomes black and white. Colour is brought back to him via a flying book which colours whatever it touches (figure 4.11). Once he becomes keeper of the library, he begins to 'colour' others by sharing books with them (figure 4.12); there is an interesting use of framing in this particular illustration, with Morris standing at a window, framing his stance, bringing the reader's attention to his actions: distributing books, sharing his passion.



Figure 4.11



Figure 4.12

Hateley does not believe that this picturebook conveys a transformative act, but rather that it shows that a text “can be about books without also being about reading” (11); this might be the case if looked at through an adult’s eyes, but through a child’s, bearing in mind Clark’s first stage of impact, the use of colour is extremely convincing in expressing threshold and agency. According to Nodelman moreover, black and white is not “necessarily a good medium for the representational depiction of the way the world looks” (1988: 68), so its use accentuates that a world without books is not the ‘real’ world.

In *The Snatchabook*, rather than strictly colour, it is the use of the opposed light and dark which provides the threshold. Depictions of reading are always shown within the warm glow of candlelight surrounding the readers, almost shielding them from the rest of the world, in a warm and loving familial bubble (figure 4.13) from which the Snatchabook is excluded. Using a simple device such as dark against light to convey the mood is a kind of intertextuality because it creates a link “between the children’s lives and emotions outside the book they are reading” (Bromley 1996: 109): children can relate to the dark feeling unsafe.

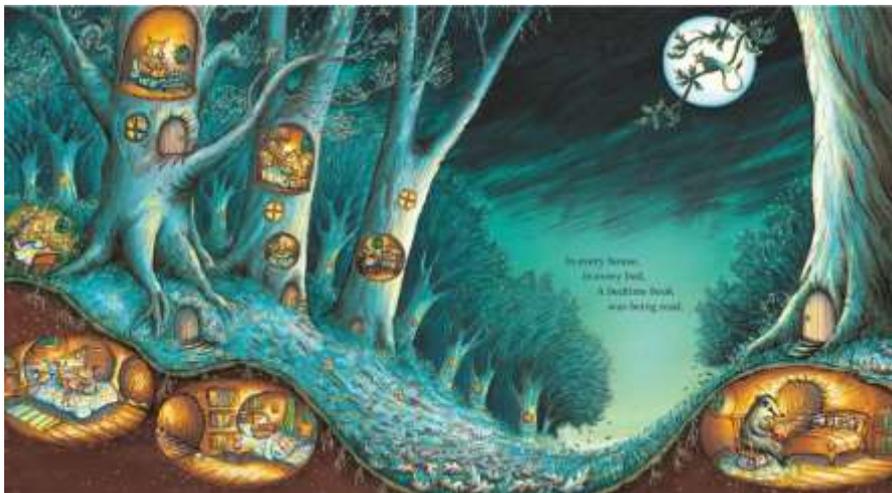


Figure 4.13

The Snatchabook moves only within the darkness at first. His otherness is emphasised by the use of his distorted shadow, shown to be almost about to swallow a pile of Eliza’s books, making the reader believe he is some kind of ogre and much scarier than he actually is:

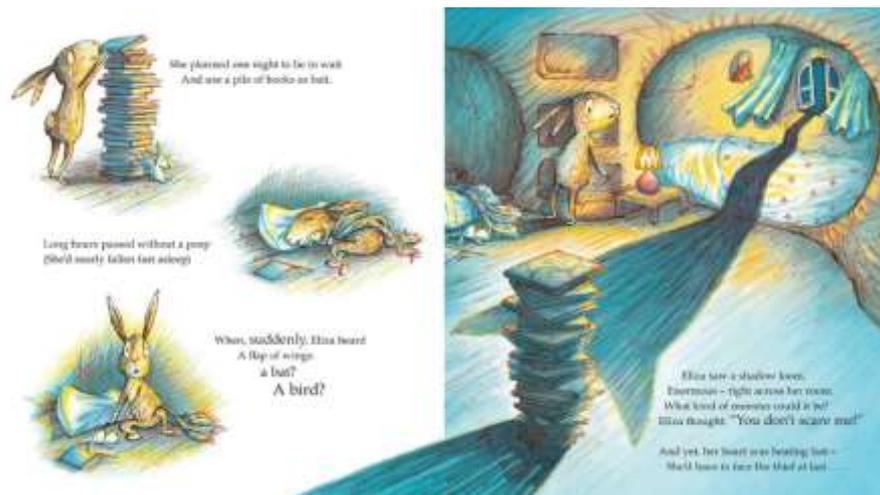


Figure 4.14

The use of light glow to convey comfort and security during storytime is a regular device as has already been stated. Showing the Snatchabook as outside of that happy warm glow establishes him as an outsider to the book-loving world, accentuating he must be accepted into that world in order to reach contentment.

Another example of use of colour is Sergio Ruzzier's *This Is Not a Picture Book!* (2016), in which the contrast is created with the use of negative space for pre-reading (figure 4.15) and full-bleed illustrations for post-reading (figure 4.16).



Figure 4.15

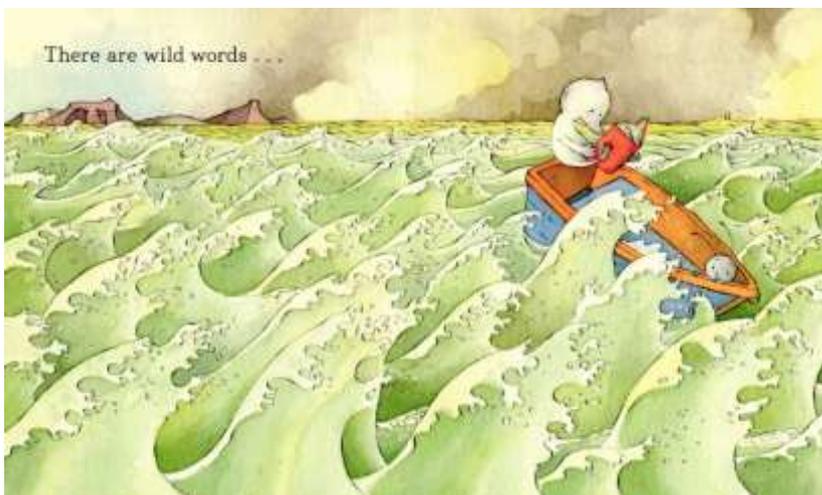


Figure 4.16

As well as the negative space, Ruzzier uses diminishing returns to express the character's frustration over not being able to read, while full-bleed openings allow the illustration to reach "beyond the confines of the page, so that the beholder becomes more of a participant than a spectator" (Doonan 1993: 81), in this case in the post-literate experience.

Even more symbolically in this book, Ruzzier chose to express the crossing of the threshold visually, with a log used to bridge either side of each ‘world’, a device which might only be realised by readers in the renewal stage:

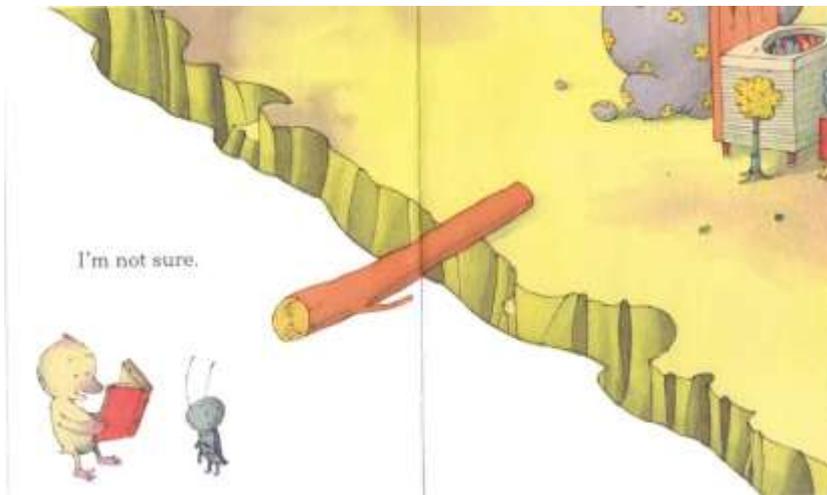


Figure 4.17

Linked to the theme of threshold within these transformative narratives is the theme of loneliness. A majority of characters begin as lonely, and reading transforms them into social beings and accepted within the community of readers and beyond. Again, it is easy to see the parallels with preliterate children's experiences. They are not quite yet part of the ‘club’ of readers. This is apparent in most of the narratives covered here but *Dog Loves Books* offers a clear example of this; from the onset, Dog is portrayed as alone with his books and with his contemporaries obviously not understanding him (figure 4.18, left plate), setting the scene not only to later change Dog's social status but also emphasising that reading is so important for Dog that he is willing to forfeit friendship, at first.



Figure 4.18

Once he has opened the bookshop and customers do not show, Dog begins to feel lonely (11). But while engrossed in books, “he forgot that he was alone”, because he brought the characters to life:



Figure 4.19

This demonstrates, again, the use of light as a way to express the capsule of warmth and security that reading brings. The following openings show Dog on adventures with book characters, with illustrations becoming full-bleed rather than previous diminishing returns, as previously seen in *This is not a Picture Book!* These experiences show him the

importance of friendship so when a customer eventually comes in looking for a book, Dog knows exactly “which ones to recommend” and how to behave socially:



Figure 4.20

As Hateley (4) indicates, Dog’s engagement with books presents access to new experiences, which allow him to step away from the negative feelings plaguing his everyday life. This perspective allows him to change his relations with others, as “his capacities as a reader enable him to forge social bonds with others” (4). Reading becomes a tool to becoming a happier and more social being, allowing “the building of social bonds beyond the family unit” (4).

It is worth noting at this point that when animals are central to transformative narratives, it is children who are instrumental in their socialising; adults do appear in most narratives, but only as secondary characters. The enabler is often a child, seen as an equal to the animal, in its ‘pre-reading’ stance. Using a child as an enabler to the animals’ transformation gives the child agency, mirroring the agency that reading will eventually bring them.

The transformation to social being is also portrayed in *How the Library (NOT the Prince) Saved Rapunzel* (2014) by Wendy Meddour and Rebecca Ashdown; Rapunzel is stuck in a high-rise flat in an urban multicultural neighbourhood, a modern swap for her traditional tower, and the witch keeping her prisoner has been replaced by unemployment and depression:

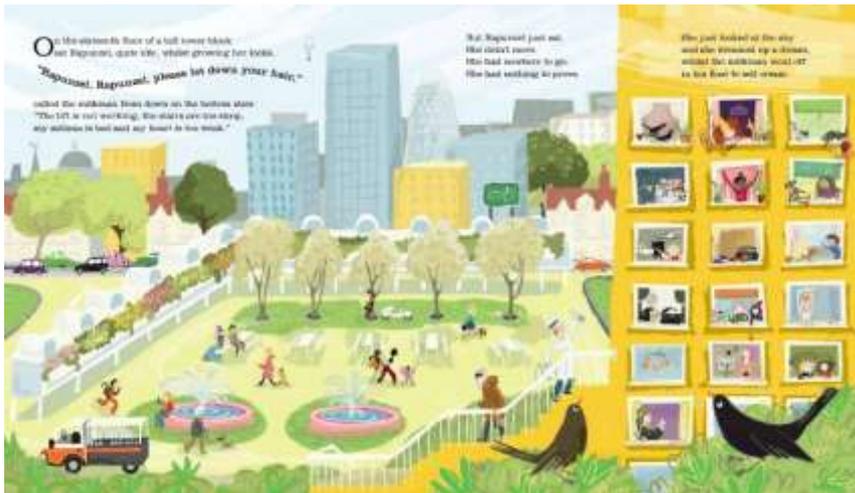


Figure 4.21

A job at the local library opens the doors of reading and knowledge to her and changes her approach to life. As a fractured fairy-tale, the book plays with the traditional motifs of Rapunzel, with readers making inferences in the recollection phase. Here, getting a job at the local library and taking control enables her to be ‘saved’. But taking control is not only conveyed as getting the job, but also what it enables her to do: accessing books and knowledge is what gives her agency. Her transformation is acknowledged in the last poetic portion of the book (figure 4.22): “Now Rapunzel has changed”, and she reads “three books a night under the beam of her bedside light” (22), with the light playing an important role here again. It continues with “So don’t just wait for your prince to show [...] But don’t just sit and wait and stare ... When there’s more to life than growing your hair” (24). There is a strong feminist message, directly responding to traditional fairy-tale

narratives and tapping in children's previous knowledge, and giving an alternative to obtaining agency through reading which is relatable to the audience. This story also emphasises that reading can be transformative in adulthood too, yet encouraging bibliophilia from a young age in order to avoid Rapunzel's dilemma.

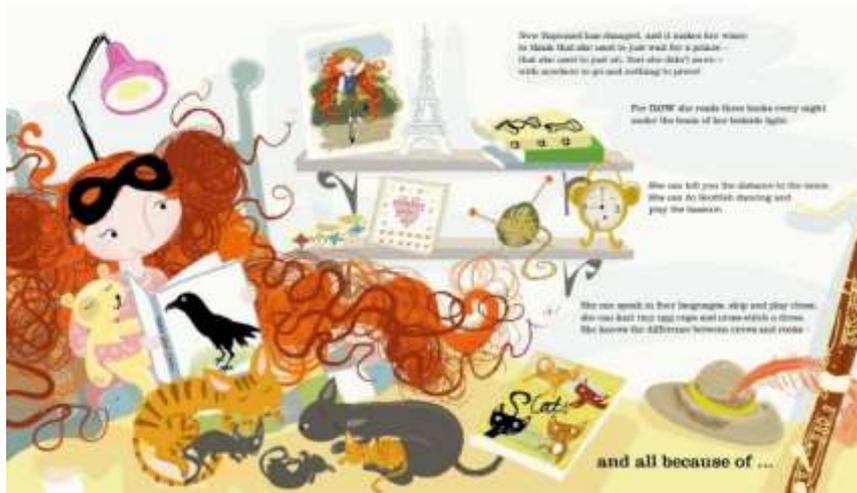


Figure 4.22

Bears Don't Read also showcases the use of an easily understandable sign, as the police are used as a symbol for acceptance. When George first crosses the threshold from the forest into the 'civilized' world, he scares everyone and ends up arrested, by riot police no less (figure 4.23). This represents the ultimate rejection from society. At the end of the book, when Clementine has taught him about the joys of reading, the first person, beside her, who reads to George is the Chief of the police, sealing his acceptance into society (figure 4.8).



Figure 4.23

Similarly, the Wolf in *A Cultivated Wolf* must adjust his rowdy behaviour and “prove himself a good influence on those around him” (Ghosh 207) to achieve inclusion. Loving books is therefore conveyed as conduit to social acceptance.

I have demonstrated with these examples that transformative narratives use a variety of devices to express the threshold which must be crossed to go from a non-reading to a reading position; whether the threshold is physical, social and psychological, each character must face change. However with change, with learning to love books, comes the reward of acceptance and love which preliterate children can relate to. The devices used encourage response in the way that Clark described, using metaphoric versions of the exclusion of not being a reader which preliterate children will understand and access at first viewing, and with plenty of opportunities to make connections from prior knowledge, which will often be facilitated by the mediator. The final stage, renewal, or rereading, will play a part in the process, particularly as knowing the outcome of the story already will encourage the scrutiny stage and recollection stage at a deeper level.

There are, however, limitations to the influence of metareading, in the books themselves but also in access to them, which I will explore in the next chapter.

Chapter V:

Some limitations to the impact of metareading

According to Nikolajeva (2010), a picturebook is a “constructed set of selected events and characters, deliberately created by the author to communicate with the recipient [...] for a specific reason [...] to produce an effect” (34). Yet Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer (2003) argue that “each human being is a unique individual with unique tastes and interests, entitled to the freedom to make choices” (108). One can wonder whether this freedom extends to children and their access to literature, especially with preliterate children. This uniqueness might be questioned according to them because of “the ways in which individuals are shaped by their culture” and that individuality can only exist within “a variety of culturally powerful registers of difference” (108) such as race, gender and religion.

A child’s access to books will be predetermined by many social, cultural and economic factors. In the case of access to images of reading, this will be affected in two specific ways, which I will consider now: the various stakeholders’ influence in the availability of images and the diverse economic and social issues limiting access to such images to children. I have already established the role of the co-reader in the mediation between child and book, but before a book reaches a child’s hands, it will have gone through a long process of production and selection: from picturebook maker, to publisher, distributor, facilitator and finally mediator. Each of these adults act as gate-keepers, making conscious and unconscious decisions as to what reaches the child reader; children therefore are only exposed to books “because adults allow it” (Nodelman and Reimer

108). This has a direct effect on which images and themes children might be exposed to. Moreover, despite its very noble purposes, producing children's literature is a business, a capitalist enterprise with a commercial value, as highlighted by Bader in her definition. Adults involved in the business of children's books, whether they are producing or distributing, like to believe that they do so for "a range of noble reasons – to please and educate young readers, to pass on the torch of culture and so on", and though those factors may be "operative" the bottom line is that children's literature is "primarily a business" (Nodelman and Reimer 110). All have a vested interest in the production of books, but also in making sure that children continue to love reading. By doing so, they might push an agenda which is more didactic than ideological.

If those stakeholders have an active role in shaping how children might think through access to certain texts, then picturebook makers surely share a large piece of the responsibility by creating the narratives in the first place. Stephens highlights this when he states that "children's writers often take upon themselves that task of trying to mould audiences into 'desirable' forms" (3). I have already looked at how picturebook makers convey their ideologies of books and reading, so I'd like to focus now on what might be excluded from such narratives. Obviously, it is very unlikely that any picturebook will focus on loathing reading, because as Frank Serafini puts it, "these images may affect the way young readers perceive reading and what it means to be a successful reader" (2004: 610). It would also be rather counter-productive when the picturebook maker's livelihood depends, after all, on children loving books. When narratives focus on characters disliking or struggling with reading, there is always a change of heart at the end. *This Is Not a Picture Book!* provides a good example of this, not shying away from the difficulties of decoding text, but showing nonetheless at the end the protagonist having triumphed and loving reading. In his survey of images of reading, Serafini (2004) found that recalcitrant

readers are often portrayed as stubborn and disobedient (611) while struggling characters are portrayed as feeling shame and dumb (612). He highlights that in his sample the portrayal of reluctant readers but also of ‘bookworms’ is often distorted (613). The reading experience is not expressed as it really is, but rather as an idealised view of what we, as facilitators, would like it to be, which runs the risk of isolating readers. This is particularly evident when looking at the lack of images of e-reading in picturebooks; according to Smith and Arizpe (2015), they rarely appear in children’s literature, alongside other electronic devices, despite being very much part not only of readers’ lives, but also the picturebook makers’ (xiii). Though this study focusses on codex, there is reasoning for looking at this issue, because this lack of recreating reality could be considered as didactic. In the majority of picturebooks focussing on reading, only codex is featured. In fact, the only prominent exception is *It’s a Book!* by Lane Smith (2010) in which a donkey, described as a jackass, and a monkey, with the help of a mouse, argue about the virtues of eBook against codex, almost recreating a battle of good against evil:



Figure 5.1

Hateley highlights that the difference in size between donkey and monkey likens the conversation to one between a child and an adult, with the bigger monkey impersonating

the parent (5) and consequently, an older, wiser generation, arguing in favour of codex. This emphasises the clash of culture between the two formats, and the narrative ultimately highlights “the limitations of the [eBook] by pin-pointing the simple but lasting qualities of a book”, which is basically everything a reader needs: “a book can do just about everything that matters to keen readers: offer wonderful stories, provide deep engagement and be durable, lasting and easily transportable” (Wolpert and Styles 2016: 105). The concluding sentence, “It’s a book, Jackass!” (figure 5.2), uses a play on words with the term jackass, making it quite clear where Smith stands in the debate: eBooks are for jackasses, and book lovers don’t need all the gimmicks, just the ‘real thing’.



Figure 5.2

Another example of pejorative portrayal of e-readers can be found in *I Am A Story* (2016) by Dan Yaccarino. The book depicts how stories have been told throughout our history, including cave drawings, books and television. Throughout the book, people are depicted as united thanks to story, but the opening on our modern world is paradoxical (figure 5.3), showing children and adults alike happy and united in a common activity, yet completely

isolated from others by that very action:

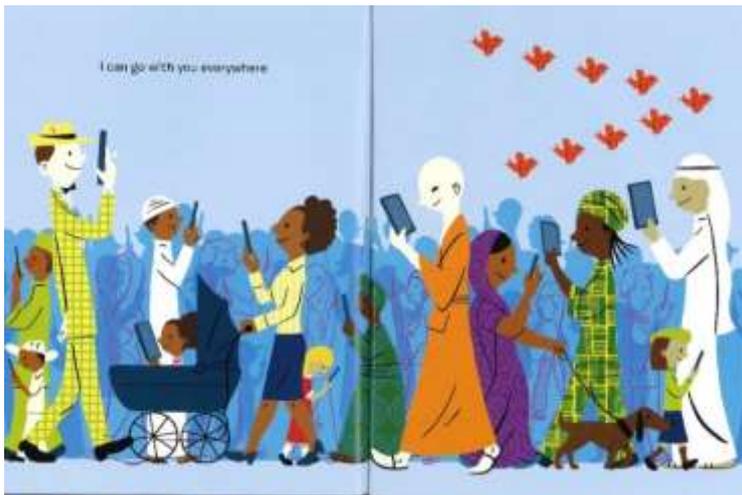


Figure 5.3

This image is in stark opposition to other images showing people enjoying stories together in the book. So while reading is still conveyed as positive, it is nonetheless lacking the warmth of the social experience. For Smith and Arizpe, this lack of inclusion of e-readers is “a re-manifestation of the romantic ideal of childhood” (xiii). To them, adults see the development of electronic literacy as “as a threat to the innocence of the child”, a symbolic childhood they liken to Christopher Robin’s. They continue by stating that the book as an object has become “a symbol for what we want childhood to be”. Therefore the lack of inclusion of e-readers and its negative depiction when included are a didactic move by picturebook makers, not only preventing children from potentially considering reading from electronic devices as a source of pleasure, but also continuing a constructed image of the child as we wish him to be. Even though Lane Smith comes across as sympathetic to how young readers might be attracted to electronic devices, his portrayal of the jackass as rather rude, only able to write in text speak, comparing to the patriarchal monkey makes it clear where his loyalties lie. The jackass is almost ridiculed for liking e-readers, sending a clear message to readers that reading fiction is best undertaken in codex

(Hateley 5). This therefore promotes a view of reading which is almost in response to the threat that eBooks might pose to codex, a threat highlighted by Beverley Croker (2009) when she states that one of two movements that impact on contemporary culture is “the move from the supremacy of the book to a wider use of the medium of the screen so that the page competes with the screen” (2). According to Roethler, “sustained absence can take on meaning in the child’s schemata” (97), and the lack of positive representations of e-reading could be considered as a didactic move by the picturebook makers to promote codex over eBooks. Metareading, in this case, “invites readers to identify with the ‘right’ kind of reading, not only in terms of content, but also in medium” (Hateley 3). Pushing the agenda that there is a ‘right’ kind of reading might not be a constructive way of promoting a lifelong love of reading, and of course might be at odds with what children might be experiencing at home, if they are using such devices or the adults around them are. Yet, Hateley thinks that the absence of explicit digital culture in picturebooks seems in line with “current adult anxieties about children not reading books” (5).

This longing for a nostalgic golden age of reading is emphasised in a different manner in Oliver Jeffers and Sam Winston’s *A Child of Books* (2016), which presents the adventures of a little boy and girl through typographical landscapes made from the text of children’s classics. This is a different type of transformative text because the characters are already readers, and the journey they undertake represents a transformative reading experience, which according to the blurb “will inspire and encourage readers all of ages to explore, question and imagine timeless stories of their own”. Classics used for the typographical art range from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* to *The Three Musketeers*. All are worthy titles of course, but such intertextual links are perhaps worryingly conservative for a book trying to encourage young readers to become a “child of books”, and surprisingly so for such a ground-breaking picturebook maker as Jeffers. *The Little*

Bookshop and the Origami Army! (2015) by Michael Foreman provides another example of how intertextual links may be influenced by stakeholders in promoting reading; when Origami Girl calls on book characters to help her stop the builders from destroying a bookshop (figure 5.4), many of the characters will be familiar to young readers, and more particularly the more contemporary characters like *The Little Princess* and *Elmer*, which are protagonists from series also published by Andersen Press, and some of Foreman's own creations like *Soggy the Bear*. Foreman plays well on the nostalgia that brings the builders to remember how much they loved reading as children and this allows them to side with Origami Girl to protect the bookshop and future generations of readers; these intertextual images aim to encourage readers to investigate new narratives, yet covert commercialism is also at play:

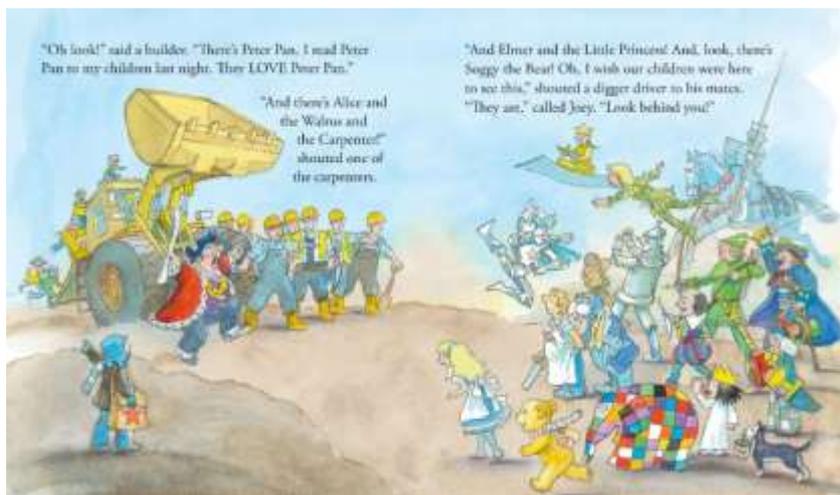


Figure 5.4

Thus within texts that overtly promote the importance of a love of reading, children are encouraged to embrace specific reading behaviours. However this can only be enabled if these books do make it into their hands. If the ability of picturebooks to incite bibliophilia is limited by their production process, the next hurdle is whether children will

be able to access them.

Children's access to books will be enabled through two main channels generally: bookshops and libraries. Access through a bookshop will be influenced by many factors: whether purchases are done online or in a physical bookshop, whether the bookshop is part of a chain or independent. Independent bookshops are more likely to go for a 'niche' book selection while chains and supermarkets will go for bestsellers, and the latter might appeal more to the general public because of discounted prices and more mainstream appeal. People buying online are less likely to browse. There are many implications that affect access to books therefore, and these also affect whether books make it on the bookshop's shelves. Nielsen Books, which create all the bookselling data worldwide, while looking at purchasing patterns of book-buying families in the USA in 2015, found that 53% of parents "estimated that half of their book purchases were impulse buys" while only 3% saying that they never bought on impulse (Nielsen 2015). This highlights the fact that unless transformative texts are readily available and promoted, they are less likely to be purchased. Furthermore, more than 60% of those parents do not do any research before making a purchase, and cite, in most cases that the reason for purchasing as "simply because their child asked for it". This would explain, to some extent, the popularity of tie-in TV books and 'power' authors such as Julia Donaldson. Putting transformative narratives into a child's hands therefore involves a conscious effort on the facilitator's part. I would suggest that this selecting behaviour is mirrored in the way facilitators and children might choose books when in the library, with browsing more prevalent than requesting specific titles. This alone highlights the importance therefore of incidental images of reading; positive images of reading need to be readily accessible to make it to children's hands despite all of these hurdles.

Unfortunately, in this current financial climate, access to books is more limited than ever, with less disposable income to spend on books and 350 libraries closed in the UK since 2010 (BBC 2016), which in turns tends to hit people on lesser income. With 3.5 million children living in poverty in the UK, Save the Children (2014) state that they are less likely to be given opportunities to flourish, including access to books (2). According to Booktrust's 2013 reading habits survey, people who "never read books tend to live in areas of higher deprivation and more children living in poverty" (Gleed 2014: 2). With reading habits often passed on through generations, this hints that "children in poorer families are less likely to have the opportunity to develop a love of reading than children from other backgrounds" (Save the Children 20). Therefore those children who need positive images of reading the most are, in this current climate, less likely than ever to access them. Bagelman highlights this in her study: "transformative education is aimed at increasing inclusion and the empowerment of underprivileged or subjugated groups" (47). Though the focus of her work is different from mine, the point she then makes does impact the argument presented here also: considering the "material conditions of the picturebook, its transformative potential are often limited to a small segment of society" (48). However, this might not only be dependent on financial and social mobility factors; people who do not see the value of buying books might not to do so necessarily because they do not have the disposable income to purchase them, as Nielsen's study (2016) on book buyer profiles shows. The socio-economic parent groups Nielsen describe as "disengaged", who value books but are not necessarily reading households and "gamers" who are "digital natives" with less interest in books do indeed buy more books for the preliterate (0-4 age range in this case) than the parent group described as "avid readers". It is obvious that there are many socio-economic patterns in book-buying and indeed

book-borrowing behaviour which impact access to specific books; these cannot be underestimated when looking at whether picturebooks impact future behaviour.

In this chapter I have highlighted the complexity of children's access to positive images of reading, which is thwarted not only by the facilitators' influence in creating them, which might exclude images of reading deemed undesirable and therefore influence children's schemata, but also with their influence on access, whether it is their availability in bookshops and libraries or whether books can simply be accessed at all. These limitations have a direct influence on whether metareading can help foster a lifetime love of reading and I will therefore take these findings forward to summarise my findings in the conclusion.

Conclusion

“Literature gives us images with which to think” (Virginia Hamilton, quoted in Roethler 95) and picturebooks, being visual texts, offer these even more powerfully. My own interest in images of reading in picturebooks sparked my interest into investigating whether metareading, reading about people reading, has the ability to form preliterate children as lifelong lovers of books. By first focussing on how children retrieve meaning from picturebooks and how it impacts them as beings, I first demonstrated that there is a possibility for children to build schemata and form identity on the basis of what they are being exposed to in picturebooks, but that this will be facilitated by the mediator reading the book with the child, not only in the way that it helps interacting with the text but also with behaviour modelling. Images of reading which preliterate children will be potentially exposed to fall into two categories which mirror the two ideological stances found in children’s literature: incidental images of reading in regular narratives offer a passive ideology and narratives focused on the transformative power of reading convey a more overt ideology of what the potential of reading is. Throughout this study I have shown that incidental images of reading are more likely to express it as an everyday occurrence for preliterate children, making them more relatable, while transformative narratives portray a “romance of reading”, carrying a message that “acts of reading are explicitly linked to personal development and triumph of adversity” (Hateley 2). Though they are effective in the way they show how reading changes characters by making the protagonists more social and socially acceptable, such narratives might not as overtly link to children’s everyday experiences.

Therefore though transformative narratives are more impactful as a whole narrative, framing its message into a completed performance, it is worth considering that incidental images of reading might have more influence in the long run. This is firstly because children are more likely to be exposed to them than they are to transformative narratives. By appearing in picturebooks with themes that are not necessarily associated with the promotion of reading, children are more likely not only to have more readily access to them but also to have repeated exposure to them. This repeated exposure might be during joint-attention reading experiences but might also be when preliterate children are looking at books, and particularly concept books, on their own. Such images convey reading as a normal, established part of everyday routines, an ordinary act. During this study I have regularly referred to Kenneth Clark's stages of understanding art and its potency in the way children not only access picturebooks but also extract meaning from them. This is significant in looking at exposure to incidental images of reading because the initial impact of such images will turn into recognition and eventually renewal, as these images appear readily and regularly, mirroring scaffolding.

The second explanation for putting forward the argument that incidental images of reading might be more impactful is that having established that most book facilitators tend to select books on impulse, it is worth considering that children are simply more likely to have access to images of reading if they are part of unrelated narratives. It is likely that those children who have access to transformative texts will be those children whose mediators have chosen such books because they "echo their own ideological positions" (Bagelman 47), therefore 'preaching to the converted'. Others might only come across such narratives within an educational setting, once they have begun their educational journey and once attitudes to reading, whether positive and negative, might have already been forged.

Incidental images of reading are therefore not necessarily more influential but more easily accessible. Therefore one of the most effective ways to ensure children can be exposed to positive images of reading is to include them as incidental images in all sorts of narratives, and particularly ‘popular’ literature, because these will be the books that the majority of children, and more particularly those children who need it the most, will have access to. Picturebook makers have a responsibility to build on this by making those images available as readily as possible. By making the choice to show reading as part as everyday occurrences as often as possible in picturebooks and link it to positive experiences such as comfort and parent-child bonding, preliterate children will accept it not only as a pleasurable experience but also simply as an integral part of *their* everyday life.

According to Roethler, “the images [...] children soak up remain with them for the rest of their lives” (96); the picturebooks here aim to model “for the implied child reader an idealised reading experience that shapes the self and improves the subject’s relation to the world” (Hateley 3) and by including images of reading in as many picturebooks as possible, by allowing children to be repeatedly exposed to images of reading in everyday life, “a lasting impression” will be created, thus influencing “the adult the child will become” (Roethler 97) and encouraging children to consider reading in the same way as they do eating, drinking and sleeping: simply an essential part of living.

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