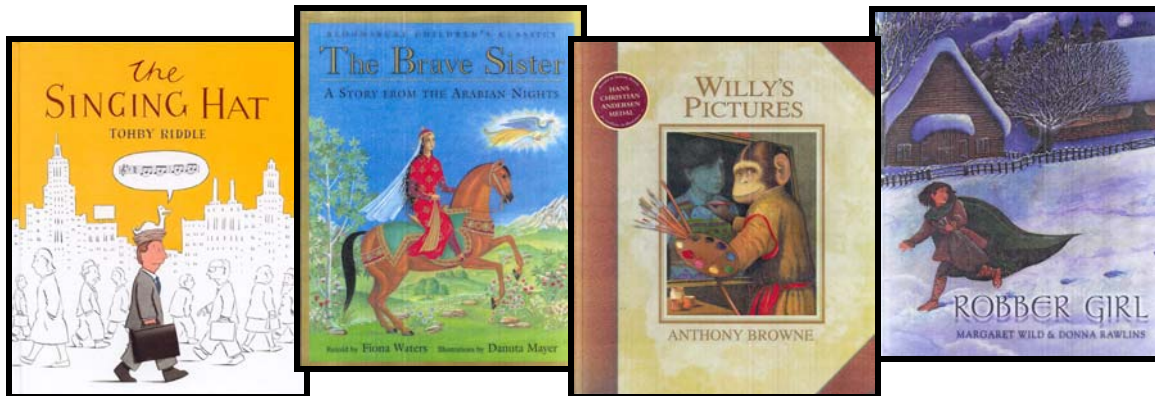


Feature Article

WHY PICTURE BOOKS?



Students view a wide range of visual texts with purpose, understanding and critical awareness.
English Learning Outcome 7. Curriculum Framework p 90

Students read a wide range of texts with purpose, understanding and critical awareness.
English Learning Outcome 8. Curriculum Framework p 91

Anyone with an interest in children's literature will be aware that picture books are no longer only the domain of the very young. A quick scan of *Fiction Focus* over the last three or four years and an examination of the Picture Book of the Year Awards attest to the growing number of picture books targeted at an older, sometimes even adult audience. These contemporary picture books have become more sophisticated, encourage multiple readings and often deal with controversial or complex issues relevant to mature readers. Picture books, therefore, are especially useful to promote the core values that underpin the curriculum and to generate thoughtful debate on a range of issues. They also provide ideal material to develop students' visual literacy helping them to achieve outcomes in the Viewing mode of the English Learning Area. Picture books are attractive, short and generally a more approachable text than a novel for reluctant and less-able readers yet can challenge and stimulate the capable student. Moreover, as James Moloney asserts in his recently published *Boys and Books*: 'boys love picture books'; an important

consideration for those concerned with encouraging boys to read more widely.

When looking at English Learning Outcomes to identify what students need to know, understand, value and be able to do, it is evident that picture books are ideal sources of text material to incorporate into the learning and teaching program at all phases of development. Indeed, picture books are increasingly used with students in Early and Late Adolescence and are noted as useful English texts both in *The Curriculum Framework* and the *Student Outcome Statements*.

From Early Adolescence onwards, students are offered texts of increasing sophistication and encouraged to read and view actively. They learn how to read and view with greater discernment. For example, they explore and discuss texts at a number of levels; identify target audiences; discuss alternative interpretations of a text; come to understand that texts can comment on and reflect society; make moral, psychological and

philosophical generalisations about human behaviour based on texts; identify the use and function of figurative language and identify ways in which text structure can influence a reader's reactions. Picture books can be successfully exploited to help students develop these skills and understandings.

A Learning and Teaching Strategy

Lesley Reece, of the Fremantle Children's Literature Centre employs a useful strategy to help students construct intelligent readings of picture books. Her methodology in workshops with secondary students involves:

A detailed textual analysis followed by discussion of how the text could be interpreted by the illustrator, followed, in turn, by a close look at the finished artwork and an analysis of what interpretation has taken place. (The Third Millennium: Read On! p. 127)

This learning and teaching strategy entails four critical steps:

1. Having an introductory discussion about the author and illustrator – their roles, previous works and perhaps considering the definition of picture book, to establish students' prior knowledge.
2. Focusing on the written text first (ideally copy text onto sheets as handouts). Read aloud. Discuss: central idea, issues, mood and tone - Can the message be interpreted in several ways? Does reading it using a different voice (angry, sad, jocular, urgent) influence the interpretation? Identify linguistic features – imagery, emotive language, personification, symbols, exaggeration, puns and sarcasm. Identify setting, characters and genre.
3. Asking students to take on the role of illustrator. Each student selects a phrase/paragraph to illustrate in sketch form. Share/discuss ideas. Discuss complexity of the role: literal and implied meaning of the words, page breaks, page layout, colour and media.
4. Introducing students to the whole book only after steps 1-3 (my emphasis). What

can be gleaned from the cover - intended audience, tone, genre? Examine illustrations closely – how do they enhance, extend the written text? Do they shape the reader's interpretation of the words? Look at symbols, colours, layout, intertextual references, characterisation and the effect of the media used for the pictures. What part does the illustrative text play in the construction of the narrative? Do the pictures help to create multiple readings of the story?

Lesley's process will work well with the picture books included in this article enabling students to achieve outcomes in all five modes of English. For example, students are given opportunities to:

- discuss complex or controversial topics in a structured situation;
- justify their own interpretation of ideas in visual texts using their knowledge of narrative structures and evidence from the text;
- explain possible reasons for varying interpretations of a text;
- explore layers of meaning;
- identify a target audience;
- reflect on what their own response to texts reveals about personal values and attitudes;
- analyse a text in terms of its social and political comment;
- write in a wide variety of forms exploring complex and challenging issues;
- write imaginative texts in interesting and thought-provoking ways.

Focusing on Selected Titles

To familiarise students with complex textual practices such as allegory, parody, irony and satire, picture books provide a wealth of stimulating, accessible material. A close examination of titles such as *The Rabbits*, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, *Detective Donut and the Wild Goose Chase*, *Archie: The Big Good Wolf* and *Unknown* can provide stepping stones for students helping them to more

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readily understand and appreciate these concepts when confronted with them in novels, drama, films, television programs or newspapers.

The Rabbits can be seen as an allegory for foreign sovereignty and provides plentiful material for debate in terms of:

- the metaphors used;
- the power and interpretation of the visual imagery;
- the bias of the message; and
- how the author and illustrator position their audience to respond in a particular way, for example the use of emotive language and the rabbits as a symbol.

An interesting exercise would be for students to write or discuss the story from the rabbits' viewpoint.

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs, Detective Donut and the Wild Goose Chase, Archie: The Big Good Wolf, The Singing Hat and *Squids will be Squids* are great vehicles for helping students to understand parody and satire.

- Discuss the idea that full appreciation of the humour and subtleties of such texts requires prior knowledge from the reader/viewer.
- Examine the elements of the genre being imitated, the visual and verbal puns, exaggeration and characterisation.
- Notice how these combine to construct particular or multi-layered meanings.
- Do these texts reflect, reinforce and /or challenge our values and world views?

Anthony Browne's many works, popular across the ages, contains numerous fascinating intertextual references. These can be analysed in the Visual Arts as well as in the Viewing strand of English to help students recognise multiple audiences and to ponder why Browne has chosen particular artists to parody.

Unknown, The Great Bear and *The Singing Hat* make comment on social, political or cultural attitudes and values. Students can explore how these simple narratives do this by:

- paying particular attention to the detail, colours, perspectives and media used;
- studying the style of the illustrations;
- focusing on the carefully chosen language.

These are also useful texts for investigating point of view, as are Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park* and Colin Thompson's *The Staircase Cat*.

As well as adding to students' repertoire of their own cultural heritage, traditional literature gives them a wider world view by introducing students to the literature of other cultures, nationalities and countries.

- Examine similarities and differences between some of these texts. Identify values, attitudes, beliefs and ways of thinking reflected in them.
- Make some moral or philosophical generalisations about human behaviour. Find several retellings of the same story for comparison.
- Look carefully at the illustrations. For example, does Schroeder's interpretation of *The Frog Prince*, or Barrett's depiction of *The Emperor's New Clothes*, affect the target audience?
- Consider the language: the structure, the rhyme and rhythm, the imagery; in what ways is the oral tradition reflected in the language?

Many examples of traditional literature, or stories written in this style, are listed in the bibliography.

Stormy Night provides an excellent example of how pictures influence the meaning the reader makes from the words. The thoughts and ideas of the girl are presented as a stream-of-consciousness narrative, and, without the pictures it would be almost impossible to make sense of the text. The whimsical style of the text and accompanying black-and-white illustrations are reminiscent of Leunig and will be appealing to many teenagers.

Students are expected to *make extensive use of writing in the expressive and reflective modes* (Curriculum Framework p 99), and picture books

provide an ideal stimulus for students' writing. All books discussed so far can be used to model particular forms of writing or to generate a thoughtful response from students. However, *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* is an outstanding text to intrigue all students and to inspire creative writing.

Another not-to-be-missed book is *Fox*, which is a masterpiece of collaboration between Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks. It is worthy of study for its originality, poetry and intensity.

- Read and analyse the written text, the economy of words and imagery;
- Discuss the impact of the illustrations, the illustrative techniques, calligraphic style, form, colour and texture and the setting which is unquestionably Australian;
- How is this achieved?

Conclusion

Without doubt picture books are valuable texts for students in Early to Late Adolescence. They engage a wide audience and while seemingly simple can be exploited to help students construct sophisticated readings. Students can be helped to think about the author's and illustrator's implied and literal meanings, make reasoned value judgements on a range of issues and recognise that aspects of construction can affect their responses to a text. Significantly, an analysis of picture books encourages students to develop their visual literacy skills enabling them to achieve Viewing outcomes. Don't overlook however, the value of sharing a picture book for the sheer pleasure of the experience, taking the opportunity to marvel at the consummate skill of the author and illustrator.

The bibliography below includes short annotations of recently published picture books, useful websites for teachers and professional reading for those interested in pursuing this topic in greater depth. Remember too, to dig out old favourites such as *John Brown*, *Rose and the Midnight Cat*, *The Wolf* and *The Watertower* to name just a few.

Bibliography

Picture Books

NB. * Denotes newly reviewed titles in Fiction Focus.

ANDERSEN, Hans Christian

The Emperor's New Clothes

Translated and Introduced by Naomi Lewis. Illustrated by Angela Bell. London : Walker, 2000. 32 p.

ISBN 0 7445 7295 9 pbk \$14.95


SCIS No: 1005697

This classic tale is enriched by sincere translation and enchanting illustrations. The text appears to be very true to the original and Angela Barrett's painted illustrations are superb. She has set the story in a small kingdom in 1913, later than the original version, written in 1837. The history of the period is cleverly introduced in many small and sometimes spectacular ways. The Emperor's extensive wardrobe is brilliant, but a highlight must be the changing attitudes and expressions of the Emperor's dogs subtly reflecting the story.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 12 No. 2 1998**

BAILLIE, Allan & BENTLEY, Jonathan

Archie: The Big Good Wolf

 Milson's Point, NSW : Random House, 1998. [30] p.

ISBN 0 09 183171 7 hbk \$25.20

SCIS No: 948335

Baillie and Bentley play with the familiar and reshape it into something new and clever in this spoof on fairytales and detective stories. Archie, the wolf tells his story in flashback revealing how his good name has been twisted by storytellers such as Mother Goose. Each event is a reinvention of a well-known story and together with the clever dialogue embedded in the text, make the book ideal for a study of genre, parody and satire.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 13 No. 1 1999**

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***BALIT, Christina**

Atlantis: The Legend of a Lost City

Adapted and retold by Christina Balit.

Mascot, NSW : Koala, 1999. [26] p.

ISBN 0 864161 208 7 hbk \$24.90

SCIS No: 984282

This retelling based on Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias* tells of Poseidon's marriage to Cleito, the birth of their sons and the transformation of Atlantis into an island fit for a god. Beautifully executed illustrations in Balit's arresting style enhance the text.

Reviewed in **Primary Focus Fiction 2001**

***BOUCHARD, David**

The Dragon New Year: A Chinese Legend

Paintings by Zhong-Yang Huang.

Vancouver : Raincoast, 1999. [29] p.

ISBN 1 55192 200 2 hbk \$25.25

SCIS No: 971786

When a small girl is kept awake by the noise and commotion of New Year celebrations grandmother tells her the tale of New Year, the most ferocious of all sea dragons. Narrated in a style reminiscent of the oral tradition and complemented and extended by culturally appropriate, striking paintings, the story provides an interesting focus for discussion.

Reviewed in **Primary Focus Nonfiction 2000**

BROWNE, Anthony

Voices in the Park

London : Doubleday, 1998. [32] p.

ISBN 0 385 40858 7 hbk \$27.45

SCIS No: 957832

A parent, a child and a dog from two very different social levels go for a walk in the park. Each parent and child gives a version of the walk involving fraternisation of children and dogs. As the simple story is told, the reader becomes aware of Anthony Browne's characteristic visual oddities and puckish humour. The delightful strangeness of the illustrations demands that each picture is examined carefully to locate the surreal and perhaps consider the significance of the intertextuality.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 13 No. 3 1999**

***BROWNE, Anthony**

Willy's Pictures

London : Walker, 2000. [21] p.

ISBN 0 7445 6165 5 hbk \$27.45

SCIS No: 1028991

In *Willy's Pictures* Anthony Browne again delights and intrigues readers of all ages with this witty interpretation of famous works of art. Each page depicts a painting inspired by an artist such as Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, Seurat and Van Gogh but Browne has added his usual simian characters and other quirky details plus clever captions. Students of the Visual Arts, in particular, will enjoy matching the pictures with the original artwork and artist. If they need help there are fold-out pages at the back showing the originals with information about the artists.



***CREW, Gary and TAN, Shaun**

Memorial

Port Melbourne : Lothian, 1999. [32] p.

ISBN 0 85091 983 5 hbk \$24.95

SCIS No: 967574

An old tree in the middle of town creates the link between several members of one family as they remember the military sacrifices of years gone by. The tree was planted as a war memorial in 1918, but time has dimmed its significance and the council intends to cut it down. This is a story about the past but also the future. The true meaning behind the tree is unravelled as each family member recalls their connection with the tree, revealing a rich history of both the town and the country. Written in the conversational voices of the family as they reminisce, the text is simple yet complex and carefully structured. Tan's evocative illustrations masterfully capture Crew's literal text and the era of the memories but also extend the implied meaning. Together illustrations and text produce a thought provoking, multi-layered message.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 13 No. 3 1999**



***FLYNN, Rachel and PIGNATARO, Anna**

Whisper Wild, Freedom Child


Ringwood, Vic : Viking, 2000. [32] p.

ISBN 0 670 88858 3 hbk \$24.95

SCIS No: 1006480

Expressive, flowing watercolours evoke the hippies of the 1960s in this gentle story of love,

family and lifestyle. Molly and Joseph live in a tent by the river. When they have a baby, Whisper, they move to a house with a tap and have more children. While Molly remains a flowerchild Joseph progresses to conventional jobs and wild Whisper finds school boring and restrictive. She finally runs away to the city following a similar cycle to her parents. The minimal text is simple but the concepts and issues raised and the relationship between words and pictures, provide older readers with much to think about and discuss.

 **GLEESON, Libby and GREDER, Armin**
The Great Bear

Sydney : Scholastic, 1999. [31] p.
ISBN 1 86504 036 3 hbk \$24.90

SCIS No: 967569

A sparse, evocative text in free prose style combined with sombre, nightmarish illustrations tell the sad story of a dancing bear's life of torture and final liberation through death. This unforgettable book will stimulate discussion about how the author and illustrator elicit audience response. It also can be compared to Elizabeth Stanley's highly acclaimed *The Deliverance of Dancing Bears*.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 14 No. 2 2000**

***GRIMM Brothers**
The Frog Prince, or, Iron Henry

Illustrated by Binette Schroeder. Translated by Naomi Lewis.

New York : North-South, 1998. [25] p.
ISBN 1 55858 997 X pbk \$10.95

SCIS No: 955158

When a princess is in trouble and needs some help, a frog comes to her rescue, on the understanding that he will be allowed to enter the palace and share her food. Despite the princess' reluctance, her father insists that she honours the promise. The frog turns out to be a charming, handsome prince who marries his princess and they both live happily ever after. As a reproduction of the famous Grimm fairytale, this book is excellent. The captivating illustrations are presented as stage sets, with the lighting of the stage and the colours of the props and backdrops enhancing each set. Each page conveys more than one part of the play and often contains surreal images adding to the atmosphere of the story.

Reviewed in **Primary Focus Nonfiction 2000**

***GRIMM Brothers**

The Six Swans: A Fairy Tale

Illustrated by Dorothee Duntze. Translated by Anthea Bell.

New York : North South, 1998. [24] p.

ISBN 1 55858 982 1 hbk \$27.45

SCIS No: 972909

All the elements of a classic fairytale are found in this modernised version of the Grimm tale. A king has six sons whom he loves more than anything else in the world. However, his new wife is a witch's daughter and she casts a spell, turning the princes into swans. In order to release them from the spell, their sister is forbidden to speak or laugh for six years and in addition has to sew six shirts from starflowers. Duntze's illustrations are interesting, colourful and contain excellent detail. They relate directly to the story-line and contribute to the narrative.

Reviewed in **Primary Focus Nonfiction 2000**

***HOFMEYR, Dianne and DALY, Jude**

The Stone: A Persian Legend of The Magi

London : Frances Lincoln, 1999. [23] p.

ISBN 0 7112 1320 8 pbk \$18.95

SCIS No: 977392

This is a Persian version of the Three Wise Men who set out to visit the Christ Child and bring him gifts. The retelling is based on versions described in three earlier books on the life of Marco Polo. Well written in a flowing, oral storytelling style, the text is easy-to-read and follow. Daly's illustrations are rich, evoking a strong sense of time and place.

Reviewed in **Primary Focus Nonfiction 2000**

***INGRAM, Anne and MORIMOTO,**

Junko
Run Damon, Run!

Sydney : Random Australia, 2000. [30] p.

ISBN 0 09 183982 3 hbk \$25.20

SCIS No: 1005205

Trust between two friends is tested in the extreme in this retelling of an ancient tale set in Syracuse around 400 BC. Exquisitely designed crayon illustrations blend beautifully with the text, imparting a sense of great emotion and urgency for Damon's mission.

Reviewed in **Primary Focus Nonfiction 2001**

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***JOHNSON, Penelope and NOVAK, Jiri Tibor**



When the Buffalo Wakes

Port Melbourne : Roland Harvey Studios,
2000. [30] p.

ISBN 0 949714 70 4 hbk \$25.95

SCIS No: 997397

Today, Alice is climbing Mount Buffalo with her father. She has regularly dreamed of the mountain as it broods over her house in north-east Victoria, and she is very aware that what she has seen as a sleepy old buffalo can easily turn into a dangerous beast. The simple, third-person story of her climb to the 'edge of the world' is brought to life by Jiri Novak's atmospheric illustrations. His feeling for the landscape is evident in the way he ably captures the natural world and the surreal, fantasy aspects of Alice's vision of the mountain.

LEMIEUX, Michele

Stormy Night

Sydney : Silverfish, 1999.

ISBN 1 876631 03 1 pbk \$25.20

SCIS No: 990872

One stormy night a young girl goes to bed but can't sleep. She is restless and full of musings about the world and her place in it. Her profound philosophical questions and the illustrations that accompany her fears are strong and effective on an emotional level. In the best traditions of the picture book, the drawings are much more than mere illustrations. It is a book where a single reading is hardly enough; one can open it at random and appreciate it in depth. Winner Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award 1999.

Reviewed in *Fiction Focus* Vol. 14 No. 3 2000

MARSDEN, John and TAN, Shaun

The Rabbits

Port Melbourne : Lothian, 1998. [30] p.

ISBN 0 85091 878 2 hbk \$24.95

ISBN 07344 0221 X pbk \$12.95

SCIS No: 948298 (hbk)

SCIS No: 1022756 (pbk)

Picture Book of the Year 1999, *The Rabbits* is an allegory for the impact of foreign invasion on the Australian continent and the Aboriginal people. Simple text and dramatic, original, stylised illustrations powerfully combine to convey the message.

Reviewed in *Fiction Focus* Vol. 13 No. 1 1999

***PICARD, Barbara Leonie and MARKS, Alan**
The Midsummer Bride

Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1999. [24] p.

ISBN 0 19 279879 0 hbk \$30.50

ISBN 0 19 272354 5 pbk \$18.50

SCIS No: 986655 (hbk)

SCIS No: 998666 (pbk)

The powers of the fairy folk, including their ability to change shape, figure in many traditional English poems and stories such as this one. When Count Alaric discovers that his bride is one of the fairy folk, he comes to the realisation that he must sacrifice his own happiness if she is ever to be truly happy. The lyrical language and the ethereal watercolour illustrations combine to make this a poignant story of selfless love.

Print off a reader's theatre version of this tale at:

www.aaronshp.com/rt/RTE17.html

***RIDDLE, Tohby**

The Singing Hat

Ringwood, Vic : Penguin, 2000. [30]



p.

ISBN 0 670 89266 1 hbk \$25.00

SCIS No: 1022036

When Colin Jenkins, a businessman in suit and tie, falls asleep under a tree he wakes up with a large bird and a nest firmly moulded onto his head. Deciding that it 'was not wise to interfere with nature' and with the added urging of his daughter, Colin leaves the nest alone. This magnanimous decision changes his life. The front cover immediately claims attention with Colin, bird on head, standing out from the drab, robot-like city crowd. From then on the pictures cleverly extend the carefully chosen, economical but evocative prose. The seemingly simple but unusual story certainly encourages the reader to ask questions about the themes raised. Is it a parable about the modern world, a comment on individuality or nonconformity, standing-up for one's values, acceptance of difference, courage? Every reader will have an opinion. This is another not-to-be missed picture book.

ROSEN, Michael J.

The Dog Who Walked With God

London : Walker, 1998. [33] p.

ISBN 0 7445 5616 3 hbk \$27.45

SCIS No: 939802

Beautifully hand-drawn and painted illustrations enhance a fairly sophisticated, poetic text that would require a competent independent reader to



access the narrative, which can be enjoyed on a number of levels. The narrative parallels the biblical story of creation with the interesting addition of a dog that accompanies God, the 'Great Traveller'. It is, however, a Kato Indian legend told to an anthropologist in 1906.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 13 No. 1 1999**

SCIESZKA, Jon

The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs! : by A. Wolf

Illustrated by Lane Smith.

New York : Viking, 1999

ISBN 0670 88844 3 hbk \$25.00

SCIS No: 1021060

(First published in 1989)

Highly praised when it was first published ten years ago *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* has lost none of its freshness or wit. This 10 Year Anniversary edition comes with a new jacket showing the Wolf in jail, and a letter from A. Wolf still professing his innocence. The story is a comic interpretation of the traditional tale told from the wolf's point of view. Alexander T. Wolf gets straight down to the business of vindicating his actions, which caused the fatal accidents to his neighbours, the pigs. The Wolf comes up with two extremely plausible reasons for these events and cleverly attributes the exaggeration of the incident to the news reporters. Presented as the speaking voice of the wolf, the concise text is complemented admirably by the pictures. The illustrations add to the overall effect right from the front cover, which suggests the type of interpretation that follows. As with the text nothing is wasted, and one soon realises that it is important to take careful note of the details provided.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 4 No. 3 1990**

SCIESZKA, Jon & SMITH, Lane

Squids will be Squids: Fresh Morals, Beastly Fables

New York : Viking, 1998. 47 p.

ISBN 0 670 88227 5 hbk \$32.79

SCIS No: 954889


As the title suggests this is a refreshing and witty approach to morals and fables. The authors assert it is the collection 'Aesop might have told if he were alive today.' The graphics are delightful and the text interesting and innovative. There are some fascinating characters from elephants to mosquitoes and even an echidna. Modern

lifestyles, attitudes and values have been incorporated into the text cleverly encapsulating the concerns of today's youth, particularly family relationships and friendship.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 13 No. 3 1999**

TAN, Shaun

The Lost Thing

 Port Melbourne : Lothian, 2000. 32 p.

ISBN 0 7344 0074 8 hbk \$24.95

SCIS No: 1014762

'When this comes into our library, I will get it out and read it PROPERLY. I liked it a lot. I wish we didn't have to stop noticing things.' (Shasta, age 15)

The Lost Thing intrigued a class of Year 10s. It tells of a boy who lives in a world governed by science and mathematics, where everything has a place and there is no place for things that don't 'fit'. Even the text and illustrations are contained in little boxes with the background pattern of the pages made up of formulae and scientific diagrams. Into this drab, monolithic world appears something, which doesn't seem to have a place – a lost thing. The boy is distracted from his usual pastime of adding to his bottle-top collection by this thing and tries to find a place for it. This original and captivating book could be used in conjunction with science fiction stories and of course, in exploring the symbolism – Just what is that poor lost thing? There will be as many answers as students. Like all good stories this one works on a number of levels. It will appeal to quite young children through to older adolescents who will enjoy grappling with the ideas suggested by the text while relishing the detail and rich imagery.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 14 No. 3 2000**

THOMPSON, Colin & PIGNATARO, Anna

Unknown

 Sydney : Hodder Children's, 2000. 31 p.

ISBN 0 7336 0968 6 hbk \$27.45

SCIS No: 1001017

This is an example of a text that can be read on a number of levels and enjoyed by a wide age range. The story is based on the experiences of a variety of dogs incarcerated at the dog pound and the labels they bear. The descriptive, watercolour


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illustrations reinforce the text ably capturing the feelings of the dogs. Variation in print size is

another effective technique for conveying drama and emotion.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 14 No. 3 2000**

THOMPSON, Colin and PIGNATARO, Anna
The Staircase Cat

 Rydalmere, NSW : Hodder Headline, 1999.
[32] p.

ISBN 0 7336 1005 6 pbk \$12.00

ISBN 0 7336 0582 6 hbk \$27.35

SCIS No: 981339 (pbk)

SCIS No: 942240 (hbk)

Both for its poignant universal theme about the disruption of war on innocent civilians and animals and its simple but stark treatment in narrative form, this book is reminiscent of Hemingway's classic short story *The Old Man and the Bridge*. Oskar the cat, the only character with a name, who once lived peacefully with his owner, survives the carnage of war. Exquisite watercolour paintings work well with the text reflecting the mood and highlighting the emotion. Written in the third person the imagery of the language transfixed each of the Year 8 RIBIT groups and a Year 12 English class.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 13 No. 3 1999**

***TROTTIER, Maxine and EAST, Stella**

Dreamstones

Toronto : Stoddart Kids, 1999. [22] p.

ISBN 0 7737 3191 1 hbk \$25.25

SCIS No: 1013045

When David leaves his father's icebound ship he becomes lost in the icy landscape of the Arctic Circle. Woven with myth, his story of survival is told to Inuit children by elders. Readers will marvel at the eerie realism of the arresting artwork, which provides excellent textual clues, supporting and extending the dreamy quality of the language.

Reviewed in **Primary Focus Fiction 2001**

VAN ALLSBURG, Chris

The Mysteries of Harris Burdick

London : Andersen, 1985. 31 p.

ISBN 0 86264 101 2 hbk \$25.20

SCIS No: 223690

[Reprinted in 1999]

Picture books are often an amazing source of inspiration but this text throws new light on the concept. A young person who shared this book described it as a wonderful slant on 'choose your own adventure'! The book is a compilation of

fourteen black-and-white drawings, which feature clever use of dark and light. Sometimes the focus is on facial expression; in some pictures there are no people while in others the characters are silhouetted against amazing backgrounds. The settings are from many parts of the world and from a range of times. Every picture has a title and a caption challenging the reader to create a story.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 14 No. 3 2000**


WHATLEY, Bruce & SMITH, Rosie

Detective Donut and the Wild Goose Chase

Sydney : HarperCollins, 1997. [27] p.

ISBN 0 7322 6007 8 pbk \$11.99

SCIS No: 917358 (pbk)

 Play on words and subtleties of plot are highlighted by the very clever illustrations in this amusing detective story. It is an interesting introduction to the detective genre and a prime example of text and pictures working together to create layers of meaning. The story revolves around a zany detective, a bear named Donut, a missing archaeologist, an important statue, a fake assistant and a pair of birthday socks. The large cartoon-style illustrations filled with visual puns reward close investigation while the prosaic text evokes classic movies and books in the genre.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 12 No. 1 1998**


WILD, Margaret and BROOKS, Ron

Fox

St Leonards, NSW : Allen & Unwin, 2000. [30] p.

ISBN 1 86448 465 9 hbk \$27.45

SCIS No: 1001015

 After Dog rescues Magpie from a bushfire and Fox appears on the scene a tale of love and deception unfolds. Ron Brooks and Margaret Wild have created a masterpiece with *Fox*. The book not only breaks new ground in its illustrative techniques and calligraphic style but it works, triumphantly. Margaret Wild's text flows and draws you in; it is never predictable and, at moments, it grabs you with its poetry and intensity. Ron Brooks' illustrations are magnificently Australian, elemental, and thoroughly captivating in their use of form, colour and texture.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 14 No. 3 2000**


***ZAK, Drahos. Story by Susan ELGAR**

The Brothers Gruesome

Sydney : Angus & Robertson, 1999. [30] p.

ISBN 0 207 19761 X hbk \$25.24

SCIS No: 984950

 From the cover to the last page the overpoweringly grotesque and repellent brothers who dominate this book will attract a wide audience. The pictures, bringing to mind artists such as Bosch and Bruegel, will rivet boys as they revel in the ugliness of the characters and their gross behaviour. Zak highlights the European tone of this moralistic and humorous story, which is written in rhyming couplets, ideal for reading aloud.


***EARLY, Margaret**

The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of

Illustrated Story Books

Romeo and Juliet

Retold and
Illustrated by

 Margaret Early.
Port Melbourne : Lothian. [30] p. (A Walter
McVitty Book).
ISBN 0 7344 0156 6 pbk \$12.95


SCIS No: 1011650

Based on Shakespeare's play, Margaret Early's version of the story of the 'star-crossed lovers' is an excellent introduction to the original. Her lavish illustrations recall illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance artists, and are clearly set in medieval Italy.

***SAXBY, Maurice**

The Devil's Trousers: A Folktale from Bologna

Illustrated by Julie Gross.

 Milson's Point, NSW : Random House, 1999.
[29] p.
ISBN 0 09 183164 4 hbk \$25.20

SCIS No: 985185

Many people envy Sandrino's handsome looks but to him they are a curse. In desperation he makes a pact with the devil to make him less attractive. There are hints of both *Beauty and the Beast* and *Cinderella* in this traditional tale, ably retold by Maurice Saxby. Stunningly presented with illustrations in medieval style.

Reviewed in **Primary Focus Nonfiction 2000**

***WATERS, Fiona**

The Brave Sister: A Story From the Arabian Nights

Retold by Fiona Waters. Illustrated by Danuta Mayer.

London : Bloomsbury Children's, 1998.
ISBN 0 7475 3904 9 hbk \$25.22

SCIS No: 968090

The youngest of three sisters is chosen to marry the Sultan. As the Sultana, she gives birth to three children who, soon after their birth are stolen away by the Sultana's two jealous sisters. Many years later the grown-up children undertake a dangerous quest and are returned to their parents. Sumptuously illustrated with gold ink borders and fine detail.

Reviewed in **Primary Focus Nonfiction 2000**


***WILD, Margaret**

Robber Girl

Illustrated by Donna Rawlings.

Milson's Point, NSW : Random, 2000. [32] p.
ISBN 0 09 183029 X hbk \$25.20

SCIS No: 1011209

 In this illustrated story featuring the recognised elements of a traditional folktale, a girl, who lives in the forest with a bear, a wolf and an owl takes in a lost child. She yearns for human companionship and finds it hard to return the boy to his family. The tone of the text and gouache illustrations create a wistful mood and while seemingly simple, the story leaves the reader thinking.

Reviewed in **Primary Focus Fiction 2001**

Picture Books in the Classroom PreK-9

www.carolhurst.com/

Websites

[newsletters/ 21bnewsletters.
html](http://www.carolhurst.com/newsletters/21bnewsletters.html)

This is a feature article in Carol Hurst's Children's Newsletter, Vol 2 No. 1 1997.

A useful introductory paper, it is a discussion of how teachers from preprimary to secondary school can incorporate picture books into the classroom.

SCIS No: 1035806

(Continued on page 18)

Picture Books in the History Program

[www.carolhurst.com/subjects/history/
picturehistory.html](http://www.carolhurst.com/subjects/history/picturehistory.html)



Another article from Carol Hurst this paper shows how picture books can be used to help students recognise that most issues can be considered from more than one perspective.



SCIS No: 1035811

Picture Books for Big Kids

www.teachers.ash.org.au/ozreading/activities/pic_book.htm

Created by Denise Sweetman, South Kalgoorlie Primary School, WA, this is a unit of work using picture books as a springboard for an exploration of environmental and social issues.



SCIS No: 1035826

Picture Books for Older Readers

www.fed.qut.edu.au/linning/picturebooks.html

Lecture notes from Lyn Linning for students of Children's Literature at the Queensland University of Technology. Includes a definition of the picture book genre, value of picture books in secondary teaching and learning, useful bibliography of books and websites.



SCIS No: 1035805

Ways of Using Picture Books with Secondary Students

www.geocities.com/Athens/1260/picbkuse.htm

Developed by a teacher librarian in SA. Ideas include using picture books to introduce poetry; for character or author/illustrator studies; to examine elements of style, such as irony, satire, humour, point of view; and to study picture as language.



SCIS No: 1035798

Picture Books for Secondary Students

www.uiowa.edu/~crl/picbooks.htm

Located on the Curriculum Resources Laboratory pages at the University of Iowa this is an extensive bibliography of mostly American picture books. However, there are titles by Gary Crew, Mem Fox, Allan Baillie, Junko Morimoto, Jeannie Baker and Libby Hathorn, and many of the overseas titles will also be found in Australian school libraries. The books



are organised under headings such as sophisticated picture books, parodies, war, history, biography and social issues.

SCIS No: 1035807

How Can You Write 5 Pages About A Wordless Picture Book?

www.geocities.com/Athens/1260/piclit.htm

Another unit developed in SA, cooperatively planned and implemented with the aim of developing student's appreciation of picture books as a literary art form.



SCIS No: 1035801

Satire: Laugh it off!

www.trinity.intime-online.net/school/satire.htm

See how a library-based lesson can engross Year 12 students in reading picture books and at the same time, help them to understand the concepts of satire, parody, irony and comedy.



Selecting Picture Books for Middle & Secondary Classrooms

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/secpicperez.htm>

On the James Madison University, USA, site this is an article by Theresa Perez that includes criteria for selection of picture books, some uses of picture books in the classroom and a bibliography of recommended books (American) and websites.



SCIS No: 1035812

Professional Reading

*ANSTEY, Michele and BULL, Geoff.

Reading the Visual: Written and Illustrated Children's Literature.

Sydney : Harcourt, 2000. 278 p.

ISBN 0 7295 3602 5

SCIS No: 1011625

Reviewed in this issue p. 22

The Dromkeen Book of Australian Children's



Illustrators

Compiled by Susan Scobie.
 Sydney : Scholastic, 1997. 176 p
 ISBN 1 86388 695 8 pbk \$92.15
SCIS No: 899826

Beautifully produced, this is a wonderful tribute to Australian illustrators. The range, standard and diversity of their craft can only be realised when they are represented together in one volume. Each illustrator has up to four pages, which display examples of their work, a photograph and biography of the illustrator plus a description of how the works were created and the medium used. Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 11 No. 3 1997**

From Picture Book to Literary Theory



Edited by John Stevens and Ken Watson.
 Sydney : St Clair, 1994. 56 p.
 ISBN 0 949898 51 1 \$30.75
SCIS No: 802926

This is a wonderful addition to the teacher's, or librarian's armoury and expertise. It is a guaranteed painless even pleasurable, way to teach or to learn aspects of modern literary theory by way of analysing picture books. Sophisticated concepts such as focalisation, intertextuality and metafiction, are introduced through picture books.

One can see the advantage of this: for once there can be a truly shared experience to build on and this is the understanding that 'begins in delight and ends in wisdom' – itself a necessary part of true learning.

Here are many of the loved picture books that we probably have in our libraries already: *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat; My Hiroshima* and *Where the Forest Meets the Sea*.

Each 'opening' has a page for the teacher, giving a run-down of the particular theoretical focus (often giving useful references) and a photocopiable student's page of discussion points and activities.

A successful poet once told me that what turned him on to English, and to poetry in particular, was being taught to analyse works in terms of literary device – a pleasure he had previously only meet in Science. Since then I no longer subscribe to the warm and woolly notion that dissecting literature

'spoils it' in some way.

I have learned a lot from this book and look forward to using it with students.

Jennifer Riggs, Educational Broker, Brisbane
 Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 8 No. 2 1994** and reprinted unabridged

GLEESON, Libby

Dreaming of the Great Bear
Practically Primary Volume 5 Number 3 October 2000. p 4-6

This readable article provides insight into the collaborative process between Libby Gleeson and Armin Greder in the production of their book *The Great Bear*.

HAMILTON, Margaret



The Picture People: Illustrators of Contemporary Australian Picture Books
 Hunters Hill, NSW : Margaret Hamilton, 1993.

95 p.
 ISBN 0 947241 44 2
SCIS No: 763330

Covers 58 contemporary Australian illustrators. Concise text includes biographical details, black and white photographic portraits, awards, background information about each illustrator's work, a list of their picture books, reprints of their work. Useful background for teachers and appropriate for students from Middle Childhood to Early Adolescence.

Reviewed in **Primary Focus Nonfiction 1994**

JOHNSON, Greer

Multiple Readings of a Picture Book
The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy. Volume 22 Number 3 October 1999.

Norwood, SA : Australian Literacy Educators' Association, 1999. p 176 – 191.

Aimed at teachers from kindergarten to tertiary this article explores four readings of Libby Gleeson's, *Mum Goes to Work*. The author, the text, the individual reader and critical literacy are examined, with the focus on critical literacy. Johnson shows how each approach, can help to develop readers' understanding and appreciation of texts.

(Continued on page 20)



MALLAN, Kerry

In the Picture: Perspectives on Picture Book Art and Artists

Wagga Wagga, NSW : Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, 1999. 185 p. (Literature and Literacy for Young People : An Australian Series : 3)
ISBN 0 949060 93 3 pbk \$44.00
SCIS No: 997462

This interesting and practical book is organised into three distinct phases: History and Aesthetics; Approaches to Art and Artistry; and Investigating Artistic Practice. Commencing with a short history of picture books, the first chapter outlines the role of the illustrator, examines the characteristics of picture books and raises the question of picture books as a cultural artifact. The second section examines the manner in which various illustrators employ the varied and sometimes unique techniques of their trade. Finally, through an unusual method of interviews the personal styles and approaches to picture books of five emerging illustrators are explored in detail.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 14 No. 2 2000**

MORROW, Robin

Place and Passion in the Work of Ron Brooks Australian Bookseller and Publisher. October 2000. p 38

An interesting one-page article about the picture book *Fox*, by Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks. The focus is on Brooks, his life, artistic process and the impact of his work.

The Picture Book – Discussion and Links



Back to Books : Creating a Focus on Fiction. Chapter 9. p 133

Edited by Susan La Marca.

Richmond, Vic : School Library Association of Victoria Inc, 1999. 2 v.
ISBN 0909978204 pbk \$120.00 (2vol)

SCIS NO: 993820

In this chapter five teacher-librarians share their approaches to using picture books with secondary students.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 14 No. 1 2000**

From: School Library Association of Victoria (SLAV)

Ph: 03 9428 4173

Fax: 03 9427 8270

Email: slav@netspace.net.au

REECE, Lesley

Fremantle Children's Literature Centre Workshop

The Third Millennium: Read On! Edited by Belle Alderman and Sue Page.

Proceedings of the Fifth National Conference of the Children's Book Council of Australia, 2000. Hughes, ACT : Children's Book Council of Australia, 2000. p 124-127
ISBN 0 909612 11 0

SCIS No: 1033858

Highly recommended, this is a summary of Lesley Reece's workshop on *The Rabbits* by John Marsden and Shaun Tan as presented to delegates at the Children's Book Conference in 2000. Lesley demonstrates the methodology she uses with secondary students who attend sessions at the Fremantle Children's Literature Centre to study picture books. Linked to the English Learning Area Student Outcomes Statements, the methodology involves a detailed textual analysis, followed by discussion of how the text could be interpreted by an illustrator, and culminates in an examination of the finished artwork and an analysis of the illustrator's interpretation of the written text.



SWANEY, Amanda

Reading and Viewing

Flinders Park, SA : Era, 1999. 63 p.

ISBN 1 86374 509 2 pbk \$28.60

SCIS No: 979625

As well as the support text by Amanda Swaney, this package includes copies of *Caleb*, *The Watertower* and *Tagged*. Swaney provides a series of graded activities for each text aligned with the National Statement English – Level 5 and 6. Western Australian teachers may need to adapt activities to support our English learning outcomes.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol. 13 No. 3 1999**



WATSON, Ken

Picture Books in the Secondary Classroom

Re-Viewing English. Chapter 16. p 182-187

Rozelle, NSW : St Clair, 1998.

ISBN 0 949898 84 8 pbk \$39.55

SCIS No: 935645

Aimed at English teachers and trainee teachers this academic text provides an overview of the developments in secondary English teaching since

the 1960s. The chapter on picture books discusses how the use of picture books in the English classroom has changed. Watson effectively illustrates how these texts can be powerful aids in helping students grasp complex literary concepts, develop students' visual literacy and stimulate discussion on innumerable topics.

Word & Image: Using Picture Books In Years 6 to 10.

Jill Bough and others. Edited by Ken Watson.
 Sydney : St Clair, 1997. 56 p.
 ISBN 0 949898 71 6 pbk \$32.95

SCIS No: 906247

With twenty-six topics containing suggested activities for over forty picture books this is a practical resource for many teachers.

Reviewed in **Fiction Focus Vol 13 No 2 1999**

Workshops

Fremantle Children's Literature Centre is the meeting place for all those interested in children's literature in Western Australia. The Centre provides:

- regular exhibitions of original artwork and manuscripts;
- workshops for students and teachers with writers and illustrators;
- Open Days and Evenings for the public.

*Enhance your knowledge of the Viewing strand of the English Learning Area with Shaun Tan and Matt Ottley. Participants will explore a range of illustrated books and develop practical strategies for teaching viewing.

Shaun Tan Thursday 15 March, 4:30 pm - 7:00pm

Matt Ottley Thursday 5 April, 4:30pm - 7:00pm
 Per Session: \$44.00. Both Sessions: \$77.00

*Enrol your students into a workshop.

Contact Fremantle Children's Literature Centre for details.

A calendar of events and workshops is available on the **Focus on Fiction** site at:

www.eddept.wa.edu.au/centoff/cmis/eval/fiction/information/index.htm#events



Address and Contact details:

Fremantle Children's Literature Centre
 Old Prison Hospital
 Crn Knutsford Street and Hampton Road
 PO Box 109, Fremantle WA 6160
 Ph: 9430 6869 Fax: 9430 5279

Email: freoclc@iinet.net

*Rita Blackburn with assistance from Jill Midolo,
 Education Department of Western Australia*

