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| Analysing Picture Books |

**Storytelling Elements:**

Plot The plots of picture storybooks tend to be simple and fast-paced. They often rely on repetitive patterns that are suited to the rhythmic nature of the picture-book design. The illustrations often assist the development of plots in the storytelling.

Character Characterization in picture books is simple. Characters tend to be identified by clearly outlined traits. Protagonists are most often young children or animals (who exhibit childlike qualities). Character motivation is usually singular.

Theme Picture-book themes tend to be sharply focused, i.e., a single theme clearly dominates a book. The range of themes is virtually unlimited.

Style Words in picture books are carefully chosen. Many picture storybooks rely heavily on dialogue, which can be great fun to read aloud. They contain refrains and repetitive patterns. They often contain made-up words or play with words.

Tone Many picture books are comic in tone, sometimes joyfully slapstick, and sometimes the subtle, quiet humor. Excitement and suspense are often found in picture storybooks.

**Artistic Elements:and simplicicity. Complexity,**

Line Lines define objects, but lines can also suggest movement distance, and even feeling. Curves and circular lines suggest warmth, coziness, and security. Diagonal and zigzagging lines suggest action, excitement and rapid movement. Horizontal lines suggest calm and stability. Vertical lines suggest height and distance.

Shape Shapes can be evaluated for their simplicity or complexity, their rigidity (as in geometric shapes) or suppleness (as in organic shapes), and their size. Rounded shapes may suggest comfort, security, and stability. Squarish, angular shapes may elicit more excitable responses, agitation, alarm, and confusion. The bigger a shape is in the picture, the more important it is.

Space Space is actually what draws our attention to objects on the page. The lack of open space on a page may contribute to a claustrophobic or uneasy feeling or perhaps confusion or chaos. The generous use of space in a picture suggests quiet serenity, but it may also imply emptiness, loneliness, or isolation. Space can also create the illusion of distance.

Colour Colour can be observed for its hue, lightness, and saturation (intense or pale). Red and yellow are warm or hot colors and often suggest warmth, cheerfulness, or excitement. However, red can also signify danger and yellow cowardice or fear. Blue and green are cool or cold colors and often suggests calm, serenity, or renewal. However, blue can also signify depression and green envy or illness. Purple can indicate royalty or mystery. The use of black and white (both photography and pencil and ink drawings) is making a comeback. Young children seem to enjoy black and white just as much as color.

Texture The impression of how a pictured object feels is its texture. Textures may be rough or slick, firm or spongy, hard or soft, jagged or smooth. Texture gives a flat surface (the paper) the characteristics of a three-dimensional surface. Textual effects generally offer a greater sense of reality to a picture. Less realistic styles may make use of texture to enrich the visual experience and to stimulate the viewer’s imagination. Texture is achieved through the skillful use of the medium – paint layers, brush strokes, pencil marks, and so on.

Composition The composition of an illustration refers to the arrangement of the visual elements in the picture. The artist decides on proportion, balance, harmony, and disharmony within the various elements to produce the desired visual impact. Composition is important to the narrative quality of the picture as well as to its emotional impact. A very important concern of composition is the organization of the shapes. Grouping many large shapes may suggest stability, enclosure, or confinement, or perhaps awkwardness. On the other hand, lighter, delicate shapes more loosely grouped may suggest movement, grace, and freedom.

Perspective (Point of View) The perspective refers to the vantage point from which we see the object on the page. That is, from what angle the picture is to be viewed. The closer we appear to be to the action, the more engaged we are likely to be. The farther away we seem to be, the more detached we are. The artist may make us see and think about things in specific ways by illustrating events from a worm’s-eye view, a small child’s perspective, a bird’s-eye view, or an unreal angle. Most picture books give us the “middle shot”. We see few close-ups and few panoramic views. A picture book has only a limited number of “shots” (the typical picture book has approximately 32 pages) and the artist must compromise on the variety of perspectives.