A PICTURE BOOK PRIMER

Understanding and Using Picture Books

Denise I. Matulka

Greenwood
PUBLISHING GROUP

A Picture Book Primer

Kiddiebookland is where we live. . . . It's next to Neverneverville and Peterpanburg. It's that awful place that we've been squeezed into because we're children's book illustrators or children's book writers. Yes, we are! But isn't our work meant for everybody? How infuriating and insulting when serious work is considered only a trifle for the nursery.

—Maurice Sendak, *Caldecott and Co.: Notes on Books and Pictures*

A Picture Book Primer

Understanding and Using Picture Books

Denise I. Matulka

Art by Megan Elizabeth Bergman

Foreword by Susan McCleaf Nespeca

LIBRARIES UNLIMITED
A Member of the Greenwood Publishing Group

Westport, Connecticut • London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Matulka, Denise I.
A picture book primer : understanding and using picture books / Denise I. Matulka.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-59158-441-4 (alk. paper)
1. Picture books for children. 2. Illustrated children's books. I. Title.
NC965.85.M38 2008
741.6'42—dc22 2008016754

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2008016754
ISBN: 978-1-59158-441-4

First published in 2008

Libraries Unlimited, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881
A Member of the Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.
www.lu.com

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48–1984).
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To all kindred spirits who love picture books:
the authors, illustrators, editors, designers, librarians,
critics, scholars, booksellers, and educators

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

Foreword ix
Preface xi
Acknowledgments xiii
Introduction xv

Chapter 1: What Is a Picture Book? 1
A Picture Book Is 2
A Brief History of Picture Books 9
Technological Evolution 16
The Publishing Process 19
Reviewing Picture Books 23
Awards 24
Conclusion 27
Endnotes 27

Chapter 2: Anatomy of a Picture Book: Supporting Parts (Paratexts) 29
Book Jackets 30
Shape and Size 35
Supporting Parts (Paratexts) 36
Illustrations 42
Typography 46
Conclusion 53
Endnotes 53

Chapter 3: Anatomy of a Picture Book: Picture Space, Design, Medium, and Style 55
Picture Space and Composition 55
Design Elements 59
Art Elements 65
Artistic Media 70
Artistic Style 78
Conclusion 81
Endnotes 82

Chapter 4: Format or Genre? 83
Format 85
Genres 96
Conclusion 103
Endnotes 104

Chapter 5: The Art of the Story 105
How Picture Books Work 105
Reading Pictures 107
Visual Interest 112
Picture–Text Relationships 116
Narrative Structures 121
Character Development 124
Conclusion 128
Endnotes 128

Chapter 6: Development, Literacy, and Picture Books 129
Child Development and Picture Books 129
Emergent Literacy 131
Visual Literacy 141
Conclusion 149
Endnotes 150

Chapter 7: Picture Book Issues 151
Multicultural Picture Books 152
International Picture Books 160
Controversial Picture Books and Censorship Challenges 168
Classic Picture Books 170
Reissues 173
Good Intentions 174
Conclusion 175
Endnotes 175

Chapter 8: Exploring and Using Picture Books 177
Building a Library 178
Ages and Stages 180
Responses to Literature 183
Evaluating Picture Books 186
Beyond the Pages 189
Conclusion 193
Endnotes 193

Conclusion 195
Appendix A: Butler and the Fly 197
Appendix B: Picture Book Timeline 233
Appendix C: Sources 245
A Comprehensive Glossary of Picture Book Terms 255
Bibliography 271
Index 293

Foreword

While teaching graduate library school students and discussing picture book art, I am often asked questions such as, "What is gouache?" "How does an illustrator do scratch board?" "How can I tell if this art is computer generated?" Though some students' questions fall in the realm of innocent curiosity, at other times they are agonizing over an annotation assignment I give for every type of class I teach that involves picture books: "Include information in your annotation regarding the illustrations—tell me something about the art. Is it appropriate for and does it complement the text? Why or why not? Is this a picture book, a picture storybook, or an illustrated picture book?"

For the answers to all questions and concerns regarding picture book art, I direct them to Denise Matulka's Web site on picture books. This fine site is a great source of information about types of media, art styles, and techniques. I am delighted to see her wealth of knowledge on picture books incorporated into a book that goes far beyond art techniques, types of media, and visual elements. Here we find a general historical overview of picture books; information on the publishing process, including a great glossary of terms; and a list of various awards given to picture books. The various types of picture books are described—from alphabet books to number books, concept books to toy books including board books, and multicultural to international picture books. There is even an inside look at how the cost of an average picture book is distributed (the author and illustrator only receive around 10 percent in royalties, and the publisher receives only around 50 percent of the price). Particularly enlightening is how the actual illustrations are processed and how this has changed over the years—from color separations in the 1970s to the computer-generated art or digitally enhanced illustrations that are the norm today.

Because early literacy is such a hot topic in libraries today, the author shares how the six early literacy skills children need to have in place before they arrive at school can be strengthened through the use of picture books. And as children's literature enthusiasts know, picture books are not just "for kids anymore": visual literacy is a skill that children of all ages (and adults) can acquire from the study and enjoyment of picture books.

It is difficult to find one set definition of a picture book—authorities on children's literature have made a attempts, and Matulka includes many experts' opinions. However, as a member of the 2008 Caldecott Committee that selected as its winner *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*—a book more than 500 pages long that alternates wordless double-page spreads with text—as the most distinguished American picture book for children published during the preceding year, I have found that even standard definitions from the past may need a contemporary twist; this is a new era for picture books and the creation of the art that accompanies the text.

This basic guide to all facets of picture books will definitely be appreciated by library, literature, education, and art students; librarians and teachers; children's book reviewers; art lovers; and anyone who is an aficionado of picture books.

Sue McCleaf Nespeca
Early Literacy/Children's Literature Consultant, Kid Lit Plus Consulting
author of *Picture Books Plus*

Preface

I cannot recall a time when I haven't read picture books. As a child I read them voraciously—sitting in the reading corner at school every chance I got, dragging home as many as the public library would let me check out. Today, my personal collection consists of over 1,000 hardcover titles. Over time, my favorites, some known and some forgotten, have created a love for picture books that is never sated. Gail E. Haley's *A Story, a Story* (1970) is the first picture book I recall loving and reading again and again. The simple idea of how stories came to the world proved to be pure magic for this reader who cannot get enough of stories.

Another favorite of mine, Robert Barry's *Mr. Willowby's Christmas Tree* (1963), tells the delightful story of a too-big Christmas tree and a cast of characters that saw the potential in what others had thrown away. Here, a simple object—a Christmas tree—has an amazing ability to connect people from different backgrounds. It has recently come back in print, as have many of the older titles.

Now is an exciting time for classic picture books. New generations have an opportunity to read picture books loved and treasured by their parents and grandparents. As a child, I loved everything by Roger Duvoisin, particularly *House of Four Seasons* (1956), a story of a family trying to decide what color to paint their house. I loved the house and the way it changed throughout the book, and I was also introduced to color theory without knowing it.

Then there's *Petunia* (1950), of course, Petunia, whom I loved because she was a silly little goose and I was a silly little girl. The diminutive world of Don Freeman's *Norman the Doorman* (1959) was another favorite. Norman's world, the Majestic Museum of Art, was a ceaseless source of wonder about the possibilities of places people are sometimes too busy to see or take note of, a world independent of ours and just as vibrant.

As an adult I have retained my passion for picture books. I have read picture books as a volunteer, an aunt, a librarian, and a storyteller. In college, wanting to focus on English studies but uninspired by existing opportunities to study nineteenth-century literature or Shakespeare, I took a class called "History of Children's Literature." I was hooked. I wanted more. Unfortunately, the university I attended did not have a formal program to study children's literature. With the help of two fabulous professors, I created an interdisciplinary major. I am the only person to graduate from the University of Nebraska with a degree in children's literature, an integrated studies program that allowed me to combine courses in child development, children's books, reading and language development, and art into a degree. Over time I realized that the picture book was the format within the children's literature field that intrigued me most.

There are many wildly popular picture books that many people are familiar with, books that have sold at least a million copies, including *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (1989), *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* (1985), *The Polar Express* (1985), *Rainbow Fish* (1992), *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), *Guess How Much I Love You* (1994), and *Everyone Poops* (1993). Then of course there is Dr. Seuss's *Oh! The*

Places You'll Go! (1990), which tops the best seller list anew each May and June during high school and college graduations. *Gallop!* was released in late 2007, just in time for the holiday shopping season. With 800,000 copies in print so far, I am sure it will surpass the one million mark before long. *Pat the Bunny* (1940) and *Goodnight Moon* (1947) have firmly established themselves as the perfect first picture books for babies. Caldecott winners (and honor titles) are guaranteed success because schools and libraries rush to purchase extra copies, which often results in increased sales, as well as a place on the *New York Times'* Children's Best-Sellers list.

The majority of picture books only sell 10,000 copies. Nonetheless, they manage to find their way into the hearts and minds of readers. In many ways these books are perhaps even more special for the lasting impression they make because they have connected with readers in a very specific way. I am sure everyone who loves picture books can quickly generate a list of books that have had a lasting impression on him or her.

While writing this book I hired an artist to create original art. Taking this approach and working with the artist taught me a great deal and really added to the content of the book. It is my sincere hope that this is reflected in the book. Throughout *A Picture Book Primer*, I refer to hundreds of published picture books—over 500, in fact; however, the art used to support terms and definitions is original, illustrations for a book called *Butler and the Fly*. Using images that are drawn from a particular story creates a flow and continuity that would not otherwise have been possible. A full version of the book is included in appendix A. An interactive color version is available at my Web site, www.picturingbooks.com.

Writing this book was a very special project for me. I hope people who love the format but lack the background to truly appreciate all it has to offer learn to look at and appreciate picture books in new and exciting ways. Academia has begun to address the special world of picture books, but often the books and articles are beyond the average reader. After all, scholars write for other scholars, so although wonderful research about picture books is being done, it can be difficult to extract the information readers to need to articulate an opinion. My goal is to open the world of picture books to readers, hopefully in ways I can't even imagine.

Acknowledgments

Nothing in life is accomplished in a vacuum. I want to thank the following people for helping me make this book possible:

Megan Elizabeth Bergman, the artist who created the art used to illustrate aspects of picture book design and development. Once I began to work with Megan, my project took on new life. Megan, you have a very bright future ahead of you.

Dr. Karla Wendelin and Professor Ned Hedges, both formerly of the University of Nebraska. Both nurtured my burgeoning interest in studying children's literature when I was an undergraduate. Without their guidance, I would not have been able to focus my studies on children's literature. How incredible to meet two other adults who loved children's books as much as I did!

The interlibrary loan staff at Lincoln City Libraries in Lincoln, Nebraska, for locating many of the articles and out-of-print books for I needed for my research. Every city needs a great library system, and Lincoln has one.

Barbara Ittner, my editor at Libraries Unlimited. Her patience with missed deadlines and meticulous editing helped me shape this book into the final product you now hold. It is a far cry from what I had initially envisioned, but in end it is the book it is supposed to be. Over the years I had amassed a great deal of picture book research culled from hundreds of articles and dozens of books. I had no idea how daunting it would be to actually form that mass of information into a book. I thank Barbara for helping me do that.

The staff at the Eric Carle Picture Book Museum in Amherst, Massachusetts. In March 2006 I had the opportunity to visit the museum. I was disappointed when I arrived to find out that in order to use the Barbara Elleman Research Library, I had to have an appointment. I did not; poor planning on my part. However, not only did the fabulous staff allow me to use the collection, but several staff members reorganized their schedules to allow me access and give me a personal tour of the facilities. The only thing that could have made that day better would have been if Mr. Carle had been in residence. Maybe next time . . . .

Joanne Ferguson Cavanaugh, for her unfailing faith in me. She consistently reminds me exactly what I am capable of—especially when I set my mind to it. Those who know Joanne know just how lucky I am to have her in my life.

And my family . . . .

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

WHAT THIS BOOK IS

Many wonderful books have been published about the format of picture books, discussing narrative art, postmodern tensions, and publishing. There are books about using picture books in the classroom, bibliographies, and compilations of conversations with artists. What is lacking is a work that explores picture books in a very basic way—taking the format down to its basics and analyzing them a useful way. This book is meant to do just that.

The idea was to create a book that readers—educators, librarians, parents, and students—can easily digest, whether they are familiar with picture books or not. I wanted to help readers better understand what picture books are, how they have evolved over time, what elements they are composed of, how they are designed and made, and some of the issues involved in using picture books with readers. My is to help readers become better equipped to work with and talk about picture books. Most of all, I hope to engender a deeper appreciation of and encourage readers to further explore the fascinating world of picture books.

Approximately 500 picture books are discussed in *A Picture Book Primer*. With the sheer number of outstanding picture books available, I could have chosen dozens of titles for every one that I eventually chose to discuss. In most cases, the titles referred to should be available at the local library or bookstore.

Remember, this is a primer, so it is not meant to be exhaustive, but it does provide a thorough overview of picture books.

WHAT THIS BOOK IS NOT

This is not a book about how to get a picture book published. Although it covers the basics of picture book publishing, there are more appropriate sources for individuals interested in writing or illustrating picture books. Nor is this a guide on how to review picture books, although the review process is also discussed. It is not a bibliography or an attempt to identify "best picture books"; however, "what makes a picture book great" is addressed.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

A Picture Book Primer is divided into eight chapters that explore picture books from various perspectives, including design, artistic media and style, multicultural issues, and literacy. One thing generally lacking in most resources that discuss picture books is a glossary of terms, principles, and facets of picture books.

Therefore, an exhaustive glossary of publishing, design, and artistic terms is included at the end of this book.

COMPANION WEB SITE

A companion Web site is available for readers interested in supporting materials: www.picturingbooks.com. The site features many interactive elements; in fact, most of the illustrations are presented in an interactive format many readers may find useful. In addition, there are downloadable supporting materials.

A NOTE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY

As you will see when you delve into the book, different terms can be used to describe the same thing. For example, design principles are sometimes called "principles of design" or "principles of art." Many art terms have different meaning and associations depending on the context. I do not claim to be an art authority, and have applied terms as I understand them.

A NOTE ABOUT CITATIONS

To keep the narrative from being bogged down with names, unless I am addressing an aspect of the author's or illustrator's style or technique, I use only titles and dates in the text. Full bibliographic information for all picture books discussed in *A Picture Book Primer* can be found in the bibliography at the end of the book.

Chapter 1

What Is a Picture Book?

A picturebook is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historic 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 the turning of the page.

On its own terms its possibilities are limitless.

—Barbara Bader,
American Picture Books from Noah's Ark *to the* Beast Within

In This Chapter

- A Picture Book Is . . .
- A Brief History of Picture Books
- Technological Evolution
- The Publishing Process
- Reviewing Picture Books
- Awards

The picture book is a format designed for children, but it can, and should, be enjoyed and appreciated by readers of all ages. Randolph Caldecott, a nineteenth-century English illustrator, is considered by many historians to be the "father of the picture book." He was the first to use illustration to complement and extend the text and created 16 picture books that changed children's publishing forever. What Caldecott seemed to know instinctively has been refined and reinvented many times during the past century by talented illustrators around the world. An appreciation of the art and story that make the format so special is often difficult to articulate. This guide take a closer look at the aspects that make picture books so special.

A PICTURE BOOK IS . . .

There is something special about picture books. The format that makes them distinct within children's book publishing also makes them unique among other visual media. A movie, television program, or Web site, no matter how stylish and flashy, somehow doesn't compare with the quiet sophistication of picture books.

Some adult readers,[1] unaware of the breadth and depth of the picture book format, generally consider picture books to be exclusively for children, particularly children under age eight. Describing the breadth and value of picture books to individuals unfamiliar with children's literature is challenging, especially if they hear "children" in children's literature and relegate the books and their creators to, as Maurice Sendak says, "Kiddiebookland."

The term *picture book* is somewhat lacking as a description of the vast body of titles it represents. A book with pictures? Pictures in a book? The continuum is broad, from wordless picture books, which tell the story exclusively thorough the illustrations, to books in which the illustrations are decorative.

Most authoritative sources on picture books cite the importance of the picture–text relationship, but it is still be difficult to pin down an adequate definition. Experts agree that picture books have illustration on every page. Aside from that, the lines of distinction begin to blur. Some critics offer straightforward definitions. Kathleen Horning states that picture books "have been especially developed as an art form with young children in mind. These thirty-two-page creations ingeniously combine words and pictures" (Horning 1997b).

Some definitions are complex. Lawrence Sipe (1998) says that picture books "are unified artistic wholes in which text and pictures, covers and endpages, and the details of design work together to provide an aesthetically satisfying experience for children." To complicate matters, some scholars spell picture book (two words) as picturebook (one word). Scholars Nikolajeva and Scott (2001, 2006) state that the compound spelling enables them to explore the image interaction, making the phenomenon picturebook distinct "from picture books, or books with pictures." Lawrence Sipe (1998) also employs the one-word spelling "in order to emphasize the unity of words and pictures that is the most important hallmark of this type of book."

Much has been written about picture books. For example, it is easy to find articles about how to use picture books in the classroom; bibliographies abound, as well as numerous theme-based lists for classroom use. The number of articles about postmodern picture books grows with each passing year. There are numerous articles deconstructing the picture books of David Wiesner, David Macaulay, and Anthony Browne.

Numerous metaphors have also been used to describe the relationship between the text and pictures. The marriage metaphor is the most frequently encountered. Some refer to the relationship as a dance, with two partners moving together in time and space to tell a story. Both of these metaphors describe a relationship that is less than complete without both halves present. However, while they explain the picture–text relationship as complementary, they fail to

consider the degree to which that balance affects the picture as a whole (Nikolajeva and Scott 2001, 2006).

Rather than attempt to analyze the work of particular illustrators or authors, this guide analyzes the physical characteristics that drive the format. Narrative structures, design principles, and the creative process are also considered.

What makes a picture book a picture book? Is it a picture book if it has 32 pages?

The second question reflects a common perception about picture books. In 2007 two books were published that challenged that idea: *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* by Brian Selznick and *Gallop!* by Rufus Butler Seder. The first has 533 pages and the second 24 pages. Both titles have illustrations, but the manner in which the art supports and interacts with the text is vastly different than in commonly found 32-page picture books.

Sometime during the last 50 years, the number 32 became associated with picture books. According to editor Olga Litowinsky, this is because a large press sheet of printed pages, folded to size, can accommodate 32 pages (2001, 65–66). Although it is true that most picture books have at least that many pages, many have more. Examples of picture books that are longer than 32 pages are *Jackalope* (2003), illustrated by Janet Stevens, which has 56 pages; *The Three Pigs* (2001), illustrated by David Wisner, which has 40 pages; and *Snow White* (1974), illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman, which has 48 pages. In addition, the classic *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (1955), illustrated by Crockett Johnson, has 64 pages. Few would argue that these are not picture books, but obviously they do not meet the 32-page criterion.

Is something a picture book if it has both pictures and words? Can it be a picture book if has one element but not the other? Wordless picture books—that is, picture books without words—are becoming more popular. Furthermore, books that have a few words and phrases are often considered wordless, including David Wiesner's *Tuesday* (1991), which has twenty-three characters and no complete sentences. *Hug* (2000), illustrated by Jez Alborough, uses only one word ("hug") throughout the entire book, aside from when Bobo and his mommy are reunited and they say each other's names. Although these examples do indeed have words, they are considered wordless.

So . . . what exactly is a picture book?

Consider the criteria prescribed by the Association of Library Services to Children (ALSC), the American Library Association (ALA) division that oversees the Caldecott Medal, which is one of the most prestigious children's book awards. Awarded annually for distinguished contributions in illustration, the winner and honor titles are announced every January at the Mid-Winter Conference of the American Library Association. The criteria for the Caldecott Award define a picture book as

> *A picture book for children, as distinguished from other books with illustrations, is one that essentially provides the child with a visual experience. A picture book has a collective unity of story-line, theme, or concept, developed through the series of pictures of which the book is comprised.*—American Library Association

The criteria set forth by ALA do not specify length or page count. In fact, in 2008 the committee awarded the prize to *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007), illustrated by Brian Selznick, which has 533 pages. The title is profusely illustrated, the illustrations propel the narrative, and although it has many of the picture book paratexts discussed in chapters 2 and 3, they work differently than in a traditional picture book. The author/illustrator himself does not call it a picture book; he calls it "a novel in words and pictures." With the exception of the back flap, Brian Selznick is never identified as an illustrator. On the other hand, *Gallop!*, a book of moving pictures, has the subtitle, "A Scranimation® Picture Book." *Gallop!* does not use a traditional medium, such as watercolors or collage. The illustrator Rufus Butler Seder currently is the patent holder for the technology used in *Gallop!*

The Caldecott Medal was established in honor of nineteenth-century English illustrator Randolph Caldecott. Caldecott's *The Diverting History of John Gilpin* inspired the design by René Paul Chambellan that is emblazoned on the award. The first Caldecott award was given in 1938 to Dorothy P. Lathrop for her illustrations in *Animals of the Bible*.

For the purposes of this guide, a picture book is one in which text and pictures work together to tell a story. This guide takes no other position on exactly what a picture book is or is not, but rather offers a perspective from which to look at the picture book format. Later in this chapter the picture–text balance is discussed, and in chapter 5, "The Art of the Story," the picture–text relationship is further explored. However, as readers of this guide will discover, the gamut runs from picture books in which illustration dominates; to picture storybooks, which are titles with longer narratives; to illustrated books, in which art is decorative; to wordless picture books, which have few or no words.

Chapter 4, "Format or Genre?" discusses board books, beginning readers, and concept books. Although some sources do not consider these forms to be picture books, this guide broadly considers them a type of "picture book" or "illustrated book."

There are many books about picture books. *Illustrating Children's Books* (2004) by Martin Salisbury and *Writing with Pictures* (1997) by Uri Shulevitz are for potential illustrators. *How Picturebooks Work* (2001) by Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott and *Words About Pictures* (1988) by Perry Nodelman are scholarly explorations of the narrative aspects of picture books. The classic *American Picture Books from Noah's Ark to the Beast Within* (1976) by Barbara Bader is almost overwhelming in its historical coverage. What is lacking is a resource that thoroughly explores picture books on a basic level. Many of the titles mentioned above include glossaries but seem to omit some of the terms used to define picture books. Buried within the rich trove of information these books contain are the words and phrases needed to confidently discuss picture books. The glossary in this guide is rather exhaustive, and purposely so. It contains more than 200 terms

from multiple disciplines—art, publishing, and design—that users of this guide can use to articulate an informed opinion about picture books.

In summary, the overall goal of this guide is to present the many facets of picture books in an accessible format that aficionados as well as experts can use to explore picture books in depth.

Figure 1.1 is a meme that attempts to create an overview of the terms often used when discussing picture books. The terms originate from several disciplines, including art and academia.

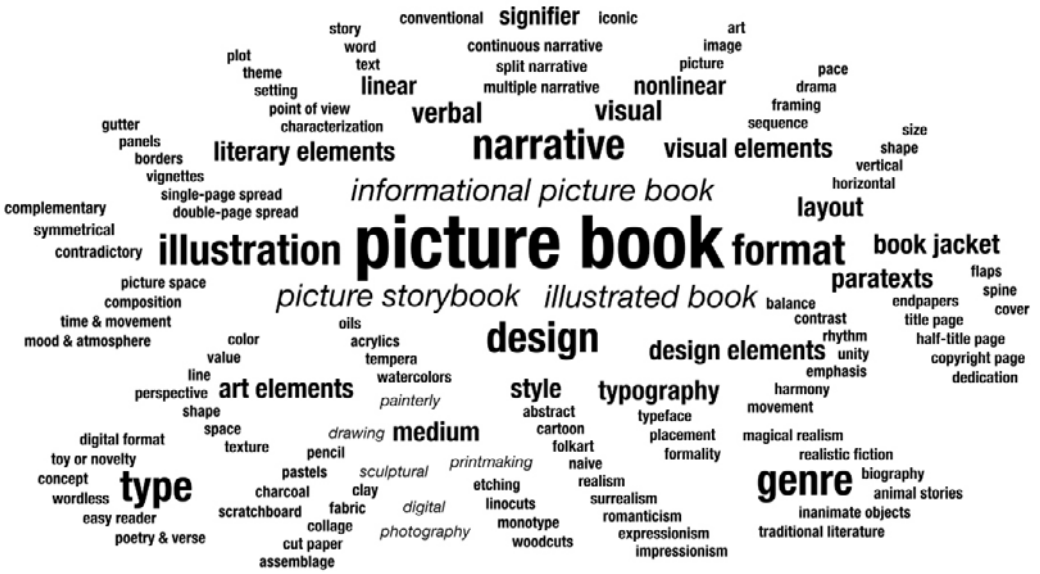

Figure 1.1. The picture book meme features hundreds of terms that are routinely applied to picture books. The meme is an attempt to organize the terms and create a relationship between narrative (text), art (picture), and design.

For an interactive version of the picture book meme, visit www.picturingbooks.com. A downloadable PDF is also available.

Picture Book Classifications

One of the approaches frequently employed to break down the vast picture book canon is the picture–text balance. *Picture book*, *picture storybook*, and *illustrated book* are the three categories encountered most often. At one end of the spectrum are picture books, which tell the story primarily through pictures. The text is generally short. Illustrated books have larger blocks of text, sometimes entire pages, and the pictures are generally decorative. In between are picture storybooks, which have a more equal balance, with text being primary and pictures secondary. In both illustrated books and picture storybooks, the story is easy to follow and understand through the text alone, with the pictures playing a

complementary role. In picture books, the illustrations fill in the gaps or work against the gaps in the text.

Some experts rigorously apply these definitions, while others use the term *picture book* to describe any children's book with illustrations, as long as the format is oversized and it is between 24 and 48 pages in length. As stated previously, some critics apply an alternate spelling, "picturebook" (one word), to describe their view of picture books.

In *A Picture Book Primer*, the following terms are used to categorize picture–text balance: *picture books*, *picture storybooks*, *illustrated books*, and *informational picture books* (including picture book biographies). These classifications are applied as a guide. They are not intended to provide a definition of what a picture book is. All the categories are similar in that illustrations play an integral role in each type; the difference between the categories becomes important in the picture–text relationship. (The dynamics of narrative structures that define, or draw a line, between categories, are addressed in chapter 5, "The Art of the Story.")

Picture Books

Picture books have illustrations on every page, with art almost dominating the text. The illustrations are pivotal to the story, with text playing an important but supporting role. Wordless picture books rely solely on illustrations and are designed to tell a story through a series of pictures carefully developed to carry the narrative. In figure 1.2 there is text on both pages, but the illustrations dominate the composition.

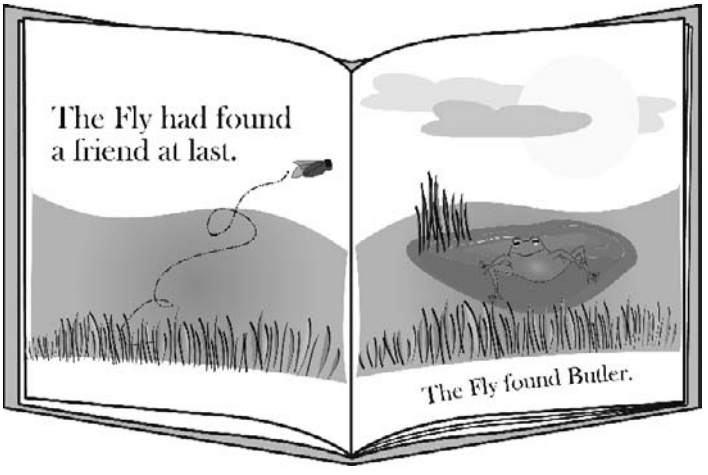

Figure 1.2. Picture books have illustrations on every page, with art almost dominating the text. The illustrations are pivotal to the story, with text playing an important but supporting role.

Uri Shulevitz, winner of the 1969 Caldecott Medal for *The Fool of the World and His Flying Ship*, sees a very distinct difference between picture books and picture storybooks. In his exploration *Writing with Pictures* (1997), Shulevitz states that picture storybooks are told with words, and the illustrations "amplify" the story.

"Pictures have an auxiliary role, because the words themselves contain the images," he says. In a "true" picture book, according to Shulevitz, the story is told primarily with pictures; when words are used, they assume an auxiliary role. Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1962) is often held up as a genuine picture book. Sendak uses white space to great effect to propel the narrative forward. His composition features pages with just text, three-quarter page spreads, and double-page spreads without words. In the beginning of the book, large amounts of white space surround the picture and text. Gradually the illustrations grow larger, eventually covering the entire page. After the wild rumpus, which is featured on three double-page spreads, Max returns to his home. The composition at the end of the book is similar to the beginning.

Picture Storybooks

In a picture storybook, the pictures complement the story, often mirroring the plot. Picture storybooks lean toward narrative prose as opposed to a rhyming text. A prime example of a picture storybook is the classic *The Story of Babar, the Little Elephant* (1933) by Jean de Brunhoff. In picture storybooks, as in the Babar story, the plot is established, with a discernible beginning and end, and text and pictures are equally balanced. In a well-designed picture storybook, the format reflects the meaning of the story; both the illustration and the text bear the burden of narration. While a good picture storybook ties the reader to the pictures and creates the drama of turning the page, text and pictures work together to propel the story forward. A good picture storybook establishes a context for the pictures that follow through the narrative text. Traditional literature is often categorized as picture storybook because illustrated folklore tends to have longer narratives that can be read and understood without pictures. However, anyone familiar with the art of Ruth Sanderson, Gennady Spirin, and K. Y. Craft has happily read their lushly illustrated versions of folk tales.

In figure 1.3 the pages have larger blocks of text. Instead of being spread over six or seven pages, the text is featured on two pages.

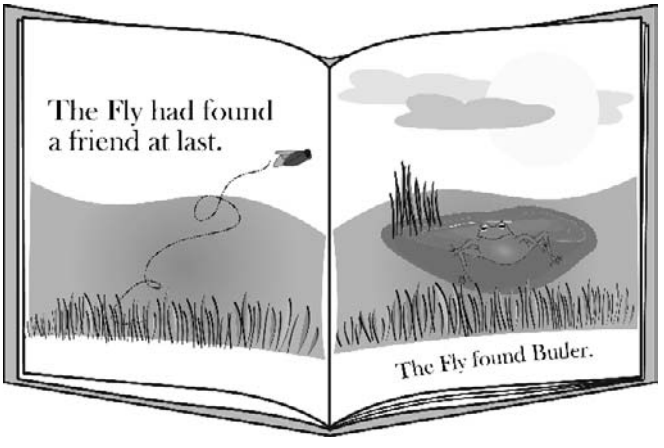

Figure 1.3. The text is condensed to two pages in a picture storybook. In a picture book, the same amount of text would be distributed over six or seven pages.

Illustrated Books

In an illustrated book, text takes center stage, with pictures playing a supporting role. Illustrations are for the most part decoration. The text also tends not to be driven by the pictures, so the drama that builds when the page is turned is missing. However, it can sometimes be the other way around. The stark black, white, and gray art in Tom Feelings's masterpiece *Middle Passage* (1995) is an example. As powerful as the story is, his illustrations capture the despair and utter terror of the situation.

Another example of an illustrated story is *Secret Lives of Walter Mitty and of James Thurber* (2006) by James Thurber, illustrated by Marc Simont. Walter Mitty was the first in the WISP (Wonderfully Illustrated Short Pieces) series from Harper Design, an imprint of HarperCollins. Although other adult stories have been illustrated, this was the first series of adult short fiction by a children's imprint. The series introduces a new generation of readers to classic editions of famous short stories illustrated by top children's artists. Other titles in the series include *Gift of the Magi/The Purple Dress* (2006) by O. Henry, illustrated by Chris Raschka, and *The Homecoming* (2006) by Ray Bradbury, illustrated by Dave McKean.

In figure 1.4 the large blocks of text are indicative of an illustrated book. The pages have art, but it is merely decorative.

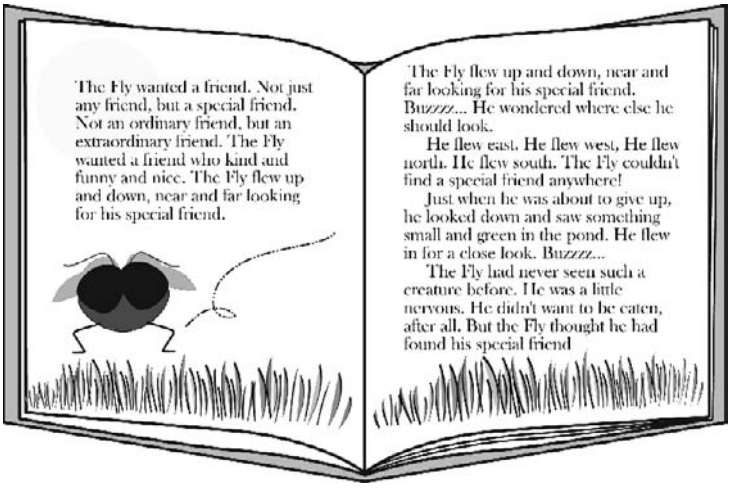

Figure 1.4. The text dominates the pages in an illustrated book, with pictures playing a supporting role.

Beginning reader (or easy reader) books fit nicely in this category, because illustrations are used to emphasize or complement the story and are not the focus of the book. The role of beginning readers is to help children transition from picture books to fiction without illustration. Of course, adults can guide children toward independent reading while helping them retain an appreciation of pictures books. To abandon picture books as reading skills develop negates the sophistication and possibilities of the format.

Informational Picture Books

Informational picture books,[2] often just as bright and engaging as a standard picture book, are mostly used in an instructional capacity. Most concept books, including alphabet and counting books, are informational picture books. While most concept books feature a rhyming text, or sometimes just one or two words per page, their function is to introduce the alphabet or numbers. In figure 1.5 the left-hand page has a brief sentence asking the reader to use the illustrations to answer the question posed in the narrative.

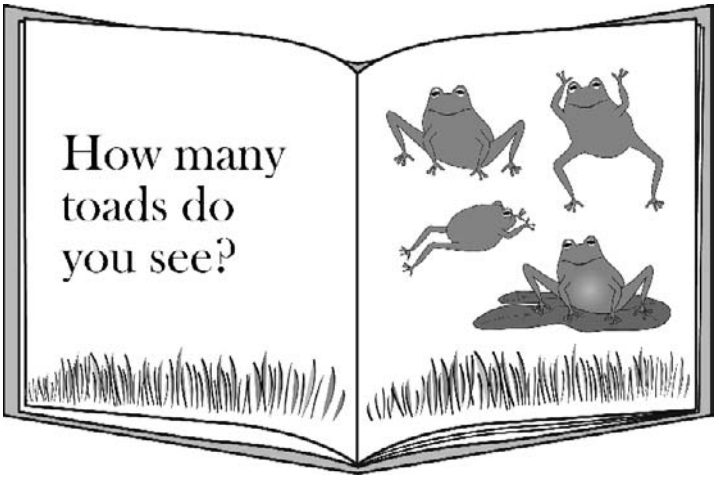

Figure 1.5. Concept books are an example of an informational picture book. The text and the illustrations complement one another; neither overpowers the other.

Picture book biographies, a type of informational picture book, generally give readers a brief glimpse into a segment of the life of an individual. Limited by page count, they often focus on the highlights or major events in the lives of historical figures, often youth or early years. In a picture book biography the illustrations are essential to telling the story. Lavishly illustrated picture book biographies are becoming more popular. Authors Diane Stanley and Don Brown are noted for their picture book biographies. Libraries often catalog and shelve informational picture books in the nonfiction section. Picture book biographies can be longer than 32 pages but still feature illustrations on almost every page.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PICTURE BOOKS

Social Implications and Precursors to the Picture Book

Before the seventeenth century, the concept of childhood didn't exist. Children's books published before 1865, when *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was published, were often didactic and used primarily for instruction. Children did not read for pleasure and amusement. In fact, the entertainment of children

through reading was at best secondary and at worst completely overlooked or even frowned upon (Darton 1988).

Early children's books included primers, religious tracts, and alphabet books.[3] Supporting woodcuts and engravings served more as decoration than illustration. Much like stock art used in newspapers and magazines today, illustrations were not necessarily associated with a particular book. Rather, budget conscious publishers reused illustrations over and over in many books.

In the seventeenth century things began to change. John Locke (1632–1704) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) challenged the existing notions of childhood. Locke proposed the idea of the tabula rasa, or the child as a blank slate. He was the first Westerner to note that children had unique needs and abilities. LikewiseRousseau, believing in the innate goodness of children, promoted developing a child's imagination through play. He advocated gentle guidance and allowing children to grow through exploration and age-appropriate activities. For the first time in Western history childhood, with its innocence and inexperience, was identified as unique and distinct from adulthood.

Both Rousseau and Locke noted the dearth of quality literature for children, but it was a contemporary of Rousseau, John Newbery (1713–1767), a printer and bookseller, who ultimately identified the possibilities of a children's market. Although none of Newbery's books were specifically picture books, they did open the door for the next generation of publishers, allowing them to take children's publishing to the next level. He is credited with publishing the first true children's book, *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*. Published in 1744, it was the first attempt to entertain and amuse children, and Newbery was not afraid to say so, using this as an avenue to market the book (Weinstein 2005).

Today, Newbery's name is not remembered for the classics he published. Even Newbery's most famous books—*Goody Two-Shoes* and *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*—are virtually unknown outside the children's literature field. Rather, he is remembered for his intuitive sense of the market. During his lifetime he published small, well-designed, and inexpensive books for little hands—perfect for children to hold and call their own.

Children's publishing as we know it would be much different without the contributions of these three men. Today children's books are the only type of literature specifically categorized by age, a concept that Rousseau, Locke, and Newbery would undoubtedly embrace.

A timeline of the development of picture books is included in appendix B.

Early Illustrated Books: The First Picture Books

Picture books familiar to modern readers evolved from the early illustrated books for children. *Orbis Sensualium Pictus—The Visible World in Pictures* by Johannes Amos Comenius (1592–1670) is considered by many to be the first true picture book. It is a far cry from the picture books published in the last 100 years. Commonly known as *Orbis Pictus* and published in 1658, it was a picture dictionary illustrated with woodcuts, which was the only feasible means of illustration at that time. It was an unusual book for its time. What earns it the

distinction of "the first picture book" is the creator's integration of illustration with text.

Comenius believed that children would learn Latin more quickly if they could make a visual association with the text. In many ways, Comenius was far ahead of his time. The combination of woodcuts with his Latin text satisfies the definition of a picture book because he acknowledged the use of illustration to expand and complement the text. His innovation also proved to be important; *Orbis Pictus* was used widely throughout the late eighteenth century.

Another early illustrated book, though not particularly a children's book, is *Kunst und Lehrbüchlein*, roughly translated as "art and teaching booklet." Published in Frankfurt Germany in 1580, it featured woodcut illustrations by Jost Amman (1539–1591). Two of these illustrations are of children. In one, a child is shown reading a hornbook, a primer made with a sheet of parchment that was mounted on wood, bone, or leather and protected by a thin sheet of transparent horn; in the other a child is shown playing. Rare indeed. Aside from primers and chapbooks, the two types of literature available to eighteenth-century children were fairy tales and nursery rhymes. (Ironically, many of the original fairy tales children read over 200 years ago have been altered today, with frightening words and images removed, to make them more palatable for modern children.)

The Nineteenth Century

The Industrial Revolution had a great impact on publishing and on children's books in particular, through improved printing presses and distribution. A growing literate middle class provided buyers for savvy publishers with a keen eye for the market. Hungry for knowledge and eager to buy books for their children, the evolving middle class began to view books as items of pleasure, not just as instruments of instruction. Book shops specializing in titles for children also began to appear.

Keep in mind that prior to the nineteenth century, illustration was used only as decoration. In fact, it was common practice to use the same illustrations in several books. It was many years before artists were identified by their unique style. It was not until almost 1800, when Thomas Bewick was commissioned to create art for *Pretty Book of Pictures for Little Masters and Misses; or, Tommy Trip's History of Beasts and Birds* (1799), that artists received credit for their illustrations in books.

Nineteenth-century illustrators found an audience eager for stories accompanied by illustrations. Childhood was now acknowledged as a time distinct from adulthood. For the first time illustrators had the technical means, such as improved printing presses, to produce books with children in mind. In addition, photography was emerging as a medium, and publishers were experimenting with ways to use it to improve print production.

During the nineteenth century children came to be clearly defined as an audience with literary needs distinct from those of adults. A mass of books designed for children flooded the publishing scene: picture books with nursery rhymes, poetry, limericks, fairy tales, fables, and adventure all appealed to the

taste of children. Prominent illustrators who emerged at this time include Randolph Caldecott (1846–1886), Walter Crane (1845–1915), and Kate Greenaway (1846–1901).

In 1878 Randolph Caldecott illustrated *The Diverting History of John Gilpin*, which was written by William Cowper. The image of three jovial horsemen emblazoned on the Caldecott Medal comes from this picture book.

One of the most popular picture books in the nineteenth century was *Der Struwwelpeter* by Heinrich Hoffman (1809–1894), a Frankfurt physician. Hoffman, seeking a Christmas present for his son, was disappointed by the books he found on the store shelves, so he wrote his own. Published anonymously in 1845, the first English translation, *Slovenly Peter*, appeared in 1848. The book contained 10 illustrated and rhymed stories that parodied moral tales popular at the time. Heinrich's version featured exaggerated and often disastrous consequences of misbehavior.

Rebuses were another type of book popular in the nineteenth century, and they are still popular today. In a rebus illustrations replace rather than complement the text. A rebus is a puzzle in which words and letters are represented by pictures that either sound the same or represent the word. For example, a picture or drawing of a heart is often used to express the word "love" or even to replace the word "heart."

> *Caldecott's work heralds the beginning of the modern picture book. He devised an ingenious juxtaposition of picture and word, a counterpoint that had never happened before. Words are left out ñ but the picture says it. Pictures are left out—but the word says it. In short, it is the invention of the picture book.*
>
> ——Maurice Sendak, *Caldecott & Co.: Notes on Books & Pictures* (1988)

The Twentieth Century

1920s

The social and economic consequences of World War I included a reduction in book publishing, although this did not hinder the interest in developing quality literature for children. Children's publishing resumed after the war, particularly in the 1920s.

One apparent problem in 1920s publishing was a lack of new and original illustrators for children; most children's books in the first part of the decade were either reprints of Beatrix Potter titles or of nineteenth-century imitators of her. In the meantime, advancement in lithography technology made it easier for artists to create pictures that were easy to mass produce. The complicated techniques of etching and engraving were replaced by lithography. Ultimately, the 1920s produced a lot of new talent. Wanda Gag, a trained graphic designer, wrote and illustrated her own books. Gág's *Millions of Cats* (1928) is considered by many to be the first modern picture book for its innovative use of design, which complemented the text and extended the narrative. It won a Newbery Honor medal in 1930, one of

the few picture books that did. C. B. Falls's *ABC Book*, with bold woodcut illustrations, was published in 1923. Margery Bianco Williams's *Velveteen Rabbit* (1922), with illustrations by William Nicholson, is now considered a classic. Nicholson is credited with experimenting with reproduction techniques and the introduction of offset color lithographs during the 1920s. *The Horn Book Magazine*, the first periodical devoted to children's books and reading, was established in 1924 by Bertha Mahony and Elinor Whitney.

1930s

The Great Depression of the 1930s was a productive time in terms of creativity, but artists felt the effects of a battered economy. The rise of the children's librarian and special efforts to call attention to the literary needs of children provided a boost that kept the market fresh despite limited publication. The 1930s saw the first serious publication of a thorough exploration of children's literature, F. J. Harvey Darton's *Children's Books in England*, and the periodical *Junior Bookshelf*, which devoted its pages to reviews of children's books. Allen Lane established the Penguin dynasty in England in 1935, which spawned Baby Puffin Books and Puffin Picture Books. The quality of these titles was bleak at best, yet the imprint kept children's book publishing alive and kicking. It was also the decade that heralded the first presentation of the Caldecott Award, with Dorothy Lathrop the first recipient for *Animals of the Bible*. In 1937, *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* by Theodor Seuss Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss, was published by Random House after being turned down by 28 publishing houses. Other prominent illustrators emerged at this time, including Maud Petersham and Miska Petersham, Jean de Brunhoff, Majorie Flack, and Kurt Wiese. Ludwig Bemelmans's first book about *Madeline* was published in 1939. The wordless picture book made its first appearance. *A Head for Happy* (1931) by Helen Sewell, thought not completely wordless, is a story about three girls trying to find a head for their stuffed doll. Although the book has text, it serves to "punctuate the story line and expel emotion" (Bader 1976). According to historian Barbara Bader, the first truly wordless picture book was *What Whiskers Did* (1932) by Ruth Carroll, a tale of the adventures of a Scottish terrier who breaks away from his owner.

1940s

World War II was even more devastating economically than World War I, and it resulted in a severe shortage of books. In an effort to combat the ravages of war on the book market, Simon & Schuster introduced the Little Golden Books, which, despite having sold more than two billion copies, were never considered "real" picture books by critics and librarians. Designed to be sturdy and hold up through multiple readings, each Little Golden Book had a standard format that was easily to identify. Titles had 44 pages, with 14 in color, and they were 8¼ by 6¾ inches, with a golden foil spine—perfect for small hands. At a time when children's books were only found in bookstores and libraries, the imprint broke with tradition and made sure its titles were stocked in department, drug, and variety, such as Woolworth's. Despite the paper shortage, several talents emerged: Robert

McCloskey, illustrator of *Make Way for Ducklings* (1941) and *Lentil* (1940); Robert Lawson; Roger Duvoisin of *White Snow, Bright Snow* (1947) and *Petunia* (1950); and Lois Lenski. Classic picture books published during the 1940s include *Curious George* (1940) by H. A. Rey and *The Little House* (1942), written and illustrated by Virginia Lee Burton. Two classics from Margaret Wise Brown and Clement Hurd, *The Runaway Bunny* (1942) and *Goodnight Moon* (1947), were also published during that decade. (*The Runaway Bunny* has the rare distinction of never having gone out of print.)

1950s

The 1950s heralded a new breed of artists, who looked to the past as well as to the future. The postwar years saw renewed interest in the children's library system, which stimulated the demand for quality as well as quantity. During the 1950s the career of Marcia Brown—three-time winner of the Caldecott Medal and six-time Honor recipient—began to blossom. Brown is noted for her experimentation with numerous illustration techniques. For example, her medium for *Once a Mouse* (1961) was woodcut illustrations, while the medium she used for *Shadow* (1982) was collage illustrations. Both titles won the Caldecott Medal. This is also the decade that introduced Maurice Sendak. During his early career, Sendak illustrated other authors' books. He won his first Caldecott Honor medal for his illustrations for Ruth Krauss's *A Very Special House* (1953). Other great talents that emerged in the 1950s include Ezra Jack Keats and Leo Lionni. Crockett Johnson's deceptively simple *Harold and the Purple Crayon* was published in 1955. In 1957 the world was introduced to *The Cat in the Hat*, the first of a type of book to become known as a beginning or easy reader. In Zurich, Switzerland, Jella Lepman founded the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). Today IBBY has more than 65 chapters, promoting children's books in every part of the world. Weston Woods Studio was founded by Morton Schindel in 1953. Since then, it has adapted more than 500 picture books into animated features. Weston Woods was an innovative force in the translation of picture books into audiovisual media.

1960s

The picture book format familiar to readers today blossomed in the 1960s. An influx of talented artists experimenting with an array of artistic media and reproduction techniques made the picture book a dominant format in children's literature. Leo Lionni and Eric Carle, both trained as graphic designers, were active in this period. Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (1969) and Lionni's *Frederick* (1968) both became classics. Both artists worked in collage. Although Lionni was awarded four Caldecott Honor medals, Carle never won.

Artists were discovering the limitless possibilities of the picture book as an artistic outlet. This, and the recognition of the unity of words and pictures in the development of children, earned the picture book serious consideration. Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) is considered by many to be a "perfect" picture book. Other prominent picture books published in the 1960s include *The Snowy*

Day (1962), the first book to feature a child of color as the main protagonist, and *Stevie* (1969) by John Steptoe. In 1967, the Biennial Illustrations Bratislava (BIB) was established. Its conferences present the best in international children's illustration and gives artists from countries around the world an opportunity to present their work. In 1965 Nancy Larrick published a groundbreaking article, "The All-White World of Children's Books," in the *Saturday Review of Books*—the first published critique of the absence of children of color in children's literature.

1970s

Prior to the 1970s, the typical child depicted in a picture storybook was middle class and white. During that decade children of color were introduced into picture books, but the initial portrayals were rife with stereotypes and cultural inaccuracies. Children of different cultures were represented, but with white characteristics, without authenticity and substance. White children also received their fair share of misrepresentation; for years they had to bear the "Dick and Jane" stigma. A few writers, such as Ezra Jack Keats, made attempts to correct this in the 1960s and 1970s. The publication of *Stevie* (1969), the first book about a black child in a realistic setting, set the tone for what was to come. In 1974, the Coretta Scott King Medal was awarded to an illustrator for the first time. It was a major step toward rectifying the lack of authentic portrayals of Africa Americans. A flood of traditional literature inundated the market; mainly because it offered easy dissemination of cultural information outside white, mainstream America. Unfortunately, the bulk of this literature had inadequate, if any, source notes.[4]

1980s

The 1980s saw a rising consciousness of racial and sexual stereotypes in children's literature. In addition, writers began to tackle formerly taboo subjects such as AIDS, presenting poignant, touching messages about the devastating disease that touches the lives of many children. In the late 1980s and early 1990s multicultural literature for children blossomed—that is, literature created by authors and illustrators of color. Prior to 1990, less than 1 percent of all children's literature published was by authors of color. Children of color were now drawn by authors of color and thus could escape the bias of stereotyping that had plagued children's books since the publication of *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (1899) by Helen Bannerman. The importance of authentic, accurate depictions of race and the role it plays in child development was clearly recognized during the 1980s.

1990s

Imagine, just over 100 years ago, children had very few books they could call their own. Today, more than 4,000 children's titles are published annually, and the selection of picture books seems limitless. Modern techniques and production capabilities, such as improved lithographic processes, allow for easy reproduction of almost any artistic medium in print. During the 1990s, publishers recognized the potential of having children's divisions within publishing houses that hitherto

did not cater to young audiences. The first picture book created with digital media, *Mr. Lunch Takes a Plane Ride* (1993), by J.otto Seibold was published. The fractured fairy tale craze was initiated by the publication of Jon Scieszka's and Lane Smith's *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* (1989). David Macaulay's *Black and White* (1990) introduced a new type of postmodern picture book. It won the Caldecott medal in 1991. A wealth of talented illustrators such as Lane Smith, Chris Raschka, Chris Van Allsburg, and David Wisner took the picture book from a format to an art form. However, many critics argue that too much emphasis is now placed on art, and that showmanship has created a format that is inaccessible to children.

The Twenty-first Century

Technology has changed the way books are created and produced. Authors were quick to adapt to computers when writing text for picture books. Now many illustrators use computers and software to create illustrations as well.

Digital art is fast becoming part of the illustration landscape. In the 1980s, technology allowed for the reproduction of full-color art that was accurate and less expensive. Media, such as oils, previously not practical for picture books, became commonplace. Now technology is the actual medium. With a computer, some software, and a scanner, innovative illustrators have braved the new frontier, with fabulous results.

At the same time that artists are creating art digitally, publishers are offering books in digital format. Electronic books and other digital formats have also pushed the boundaries, giving illustrators a whole new way to create and explore and giving readers new ways to experience stories. Consider digital libraries, such as the International Children's Digital Library (ICDL). Still early in its development, the ICDL collection has more than 1,900 titles in 39 languages.[5]

It is interesting that electronic versions of children's books have not received the same attention as adult publishing. The most substantial effort to build a functioning company specializing in e-picture books for children was launched by ipicturebooks.com in 2000, which in 2008 was defunct. Harold Underdown, formerly of ipicturebook.com, cites several reasons for this failure, the primary one being the challenge of marketing and selling e-picture books to consumers. He believes that e-books for children will eventually find a niche, and states that sales are steadily increasing; in five years there will be a rebirth of e-books for children. Perhaps he is right. A new company incorporated in 2008, Lookybook, is an online site that offers digital editions of hundreds of picture books. Read more about Lookybook in chapter 4.

TECHNOLOGICAL EVOLUTION

Printing Technology

The development of picture books is closely linked to the development of printing technology. Early printing was crude. Although the invention of moveable