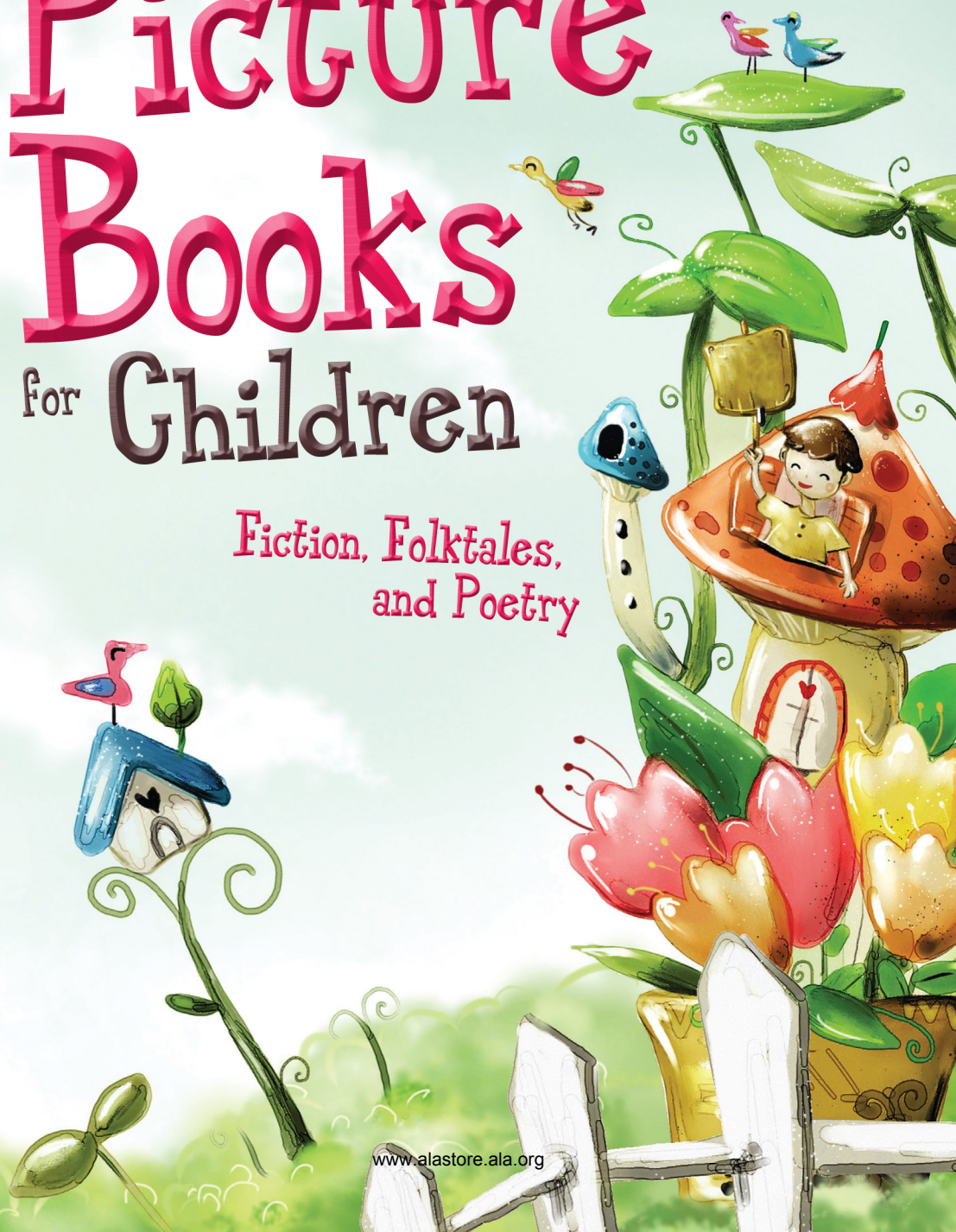


Mary Northrup

Picture Books for Children

*Fiction, Folktales,
and Poetry*



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and Poetry*

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MARY NORTHRUP is the reference librarian at Metropolitan Community College–Maple Woods, Kansas City, Missouri. She has written for children, teachers, librarians, and writers. Her publication credits include several chapters in *Writing and Publishing: The Librarians' Handbook* (American Library Association, 2010) and the books *Short on Time, Long on Learning* (Linworth, 2000) and *American Computer Pioneers* (Enslow, 1998). She has written for Writer's Institute Publications, including four editions of *Writer's Guide to Current Children's Books*, and is a frequent contributor to its annual *Children's Writer Guide*. She reviews for *LMC: Library Media Connection* and *EMRO: Educational Media Reviews Online*. Her articles have appeared in *Book Links*, *Children's Writer*, and other publications. Northrup earned her master's degree in library science at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. Her undergraduate degree is in elementary education. She serves on the board of the Missouri Center for the Book.

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Preface

The purpose of this book is to present some of the best of children's picture books for use in the classroom, library, or home. What an enjoyable experience it was to select, reading or rereading many picture books, experiencing the beauty of the words and the art.

The scope of the book includes fiction, poetry, and folktales/fairy tales. Nonfiction or informational picture books are not included, although fictionalized versions of historical events and lives are. If there was any doubt, I checked the Cataloging-in-Publication data and noted the Library of Congress subject headings to ensure that "Juvenile Fiction" was the subheading.

The books are intended for four- to eight-year-olds, although some indicate a younger or older age. Age designations, like reading levels, are guidelines only. Your child or class may enjoy certain of the books at age three, or ten, or older.

The selected books were in print as of the writing and span the years from 2000 to 2011, with the majority published in the last five years. The books are hardcover, unless specified as available only in paperback or library binding.

The audience for this book includes K–3 teachers, librarians in schools and public libraries, preservice teachers and librarians taking children's literature courses, day care center teachers, parents and grandparents, homeschooling parents, other caregivers, and writers and aspiring writers who are interested in picture books. I hope that those in this audience will find the annotations helpful in selecting quality books for programming, classroom use, one-on-one sharing, and inspiration for books of the future.

I selected books from the very many I read to show the wide variety of styles in art and in story, to feature a broad range of authors and illustrators, to portray worldwide

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diversity, to provide a balance of female and male main characters, and to show the many subjects in picture books written to engage children. I included some of the books that have won awards that recognize excellence in picture books, including the Caldecott Medal, the Coretta Scott King Book Award, the Schneider Family Book Award, the Pura Belpré Award, the Boston Globe–Horn Book Award, the Christopher Award, the Charlotte Zolotow Award, the Golden Kite Award, the Sydney Taylor Book Award, and the Américas Book Award. Books published in Canada are included, as well as books written for children in foreign countries—Japan, France, Germany, and others—before appearing in the United States.

Several alphabet books fall within the scope of this book. A classic subgenre of picture books, the best ones are clever, beautiful, surprising, or all of these. Some, such as Gennady Spirin's *A Apple Pie*, are classic. Others, like Yuyi Morales's *Just in Case*, feature an alphabet within the story.

I included poetry, although it is not strictly defined as fiction. Several of the books that feature poems, such as *Oh, Brother!* by Nikki Grimes, could also be considered fiction because they tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end and develop their characters. Quality picture books classified as poetry will, besides offering a pleasurable listening experience, aid in the appreciation of language which helps the child developing reading and writing skills.

Folktales, fairy tales, and other stories based on the oral traditions or traditional literature of countries are a natural for picture books. This book contains one chapter devoted to these. I included a variety of types of tales, including tales from other countries and cultures.

It is my hope that the readers of this book will find many titles to read to children and to select for, or borrow from, the library. Teachers and librarians, of course, know the value of libraries and the importance of support for public libraries and school libraries. Aspiring writers must read to learn their craft and so are usually big library supporters. Parents and caregivers in the know realize what a treasure their libraries are.

Might I also include a plea to support your independent bookstore when you purchase books for your own personal library? These local businesses make our cities unique and culturally vibrant. And if your city is home to a children's bookstore, so much the better! Here in Kansas City, Missouri, we are fortunate to have the Reading Reptile, a treasure for the region.

A hearty thank-you goes to the Mid-Continent Public Library, whose employees at my local branch and throughout the system helped with a constant stream of inter-library loan books. I could not have written this book without you.

Thank you, too, to the librarians and teachers who talked to me about books. It is always a pleasure to discuss picture books with professionals and to trade suggestions of favorites.

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I would like to thank my editor at ALA Editions, Stephanie Zvirin. She is a joy to work with and is unfailingly upbeat and encouraging, no matter how many questions I ask. I must also thank Patricia J. Cianciolo, the author of four previous editions of *Picture Books for Children* published by the American Library Association, who paved the way for this book. Her books were a guidepost and an inspiration to me. And finally, my deep appreciation goes to Crockett Johnson, author of *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, and Maj Lindman, author of the Flicka, Ricka, Dicka books. These are my earliest memories of picture books, and among my favorite books as a child. From these and other books in the children's section of the public library I learned to love books and reading, school and learning, and, eventually, teaching and writing. Like all good picture books, their work lives on.

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Where Words and Art Come Together

Open a book and enter a new world. Open a picture book and enter that world magnified, through words and illustrations. The text and art in the picture book intertwine so completely that, in the best, we cannot imagine one without the other.

Think of the books that you remember from your childhood. Perhaps a classic, such as *Make Way for Ducklings* or *The Little Engine that Could*, or a character, such as Frances, Mike Mulligan, Curious George, or Madeline. Being read to and visiting a library, thrilled by the prospect of finding shelves full of choices, may be cherished memories. It is these moments that we, as librarians, teachers, and parents, wish for the children to whom we read and for whom we provide books.

Picture books encompass all subjects, fiction or nonfiction. Not just for the prereading crowd, they entertain and entrance the youngest children to adults. Their reach is far, and their power to inspire is wide. In this chapter we examine the picture book, its elements and structure, its uses and its future.

WHAT IS A PICTURE BOOK?

With a small number of pages, and not too many words on each page, picture books appear to be the easiest children's books—to read, to write, to analyze. But this perceived simplicity belies a complex art form. As in a poem, a genre to which the

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picture book has been compared, each word must count. The structure is rigid. Most important, the words and illustrations must work together: one supports and builds on the other, and even transforms it. The author of a picture book writes the text always mindful of how those words will be illustrated. The illustrator creates the art to integrate completely with the text.

A picture book usually contains thirty-two pages but can be longer or shorter, always in increments of eight pages. This standard came about because of the way pages are printed and bound. Of these thirty-two pages, twenty-eight or twenty-nine make up the story. The others include the title page, copyright page, and sometimes a dedication page or a double page for the title. Usually, then, the book contains fourteen double pages. Each page or two-page spread holds the words and illustrations that create one scene of the story. The page breaks supply a natural pause at the end of the words on that page. Page turns reveal a new scene of picture and text, and the story continues.

The number of words in a picture book is fewer than 1,000, and often considerably under that. Books that contain much longer text in relation to the illustrations are considered illustrated books rather than picture books. In these, one scene is portrayed on a page spread, out of several described in the accompanying text.

In the picture book, placement of the text and illustrations in relation to each other influences the pacing and mood of the story. Variations range from text and art separated, either on different pages or in a box or border on the same page, to both integrated on the same page, either as blocks of text within the illustration or in nonstandard form such as swirls or lines. In some, the words even become part of the illustration because of their form and shape.

How the illustrations and the text work with each other—that is the essence of the picture book. In some cases, the illustrations portray what the text indicates. In others, the illustrations provide more details that enrich the story. And in some instances, the illustrations and text contradict each other. Marla Frazee's *A Couple of Boys Have the Best Week Ever* takes this delightful contradiction to humorous heights. On one page, the text states that a character arrived “with just a couple of his belongings,” while the illustration shows at least five boxes, three bags, and a basket, all overflowing with items. The rest of the book offers more of the same, to hilarious effect.

Aside from the occasional picture book with purposeful contradiction, the text-art interaction should pass scanning for accuracy. Zena Sutherland in *Children and Books* states that children are strictly literal about the pictures agreeing with the words. They understand different styles and techniques, but will not be so understanding if the color stated in the text is not reflected in the illustration, or if the action described in the words appears on a different page in the illustrations.¹

Some picture books do not consist of intact square or rectangular pages. Lois Ehlert's *Leaf Man* contains pages cut into short spikes or curves on the top, lending a pleasing feel as pages are lifted and turned. *Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears* by Emily Gravett features bite marks, torn edges, and foldouts.

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Because many picture book illustrations spread over two pages, how the “gutter” (where the two pages come together in the bound middle) is handled affects the illustration. The artwork should not show uneven matching along this line.

In addition to what is happening inside the book, the size and shape of the physical volume is also important. Whether a book is large, small, square, rectangular, horizontal, or vertical, its physical format was a considered decision made by the designers in relation to the subject of the book.

While picture books rely on the integration of text and art, wordless picture books consist of intriguing illustrations that encourage the young reader to tell the story in his or her words.

Books such as Jerry Pinkney’s *The Lion & the Mouse* and Barbara Lehman’s *Museum Trip* contain no words. The stories are told entirely through the illustrations. Wordless books offer interesting opportunities for storytelling interaction between the parent, teacher, or other adult reader and the child or children sharing the book.

Whether a parent is reading to a child alone, or a teacher or librarian is reading to a group of children, the adult has purchased or selected the book. Even if the child has picked it out from others on the bookshelf, the adult is usually the reason for that book being on the shelf to be selected. Teachers and librarians in school libraries or media centers read reviews and select books that they think the children will enjoy, but they also consider the curriculum and what books can be used to teach or supplement areas or concepts within it.

By age four, when they would be ready for the titles in this book, most children know the basics of print books: that they have a front and a back, and that a story is inside. Children who have not been read to will need more intensive instruction in the parts of a book in order to ensure literacy and reading success. A good school library or media center program will build upon this with all children to cover more sophisticated concepts concerning books.

The child, then, is ready to hear the story—often many times—and to recognize how it is read. After several readings, the child will be able to, with or without prompting, finish a sentence or chant a repetitive phrase. Asking questions, the adult reader encourages the child to use observation, sequencing, and speculation. The size and energy level of the group dictate the timing of this discussion, either during the story or at the end.

In all cases where picture books are used in instructional activities, adults must not lose sight of the fact that encouraging children to enjoy reading is of prime importance. Reading quality literature because it is an enjoyable leisure activity—that is what children should take away from instruction.

Many resources exist to help integrate picture books into the curriculum of the elementary grades. Some are mentioned in the suggested resources section at the end of this book. Professional publications for teachers and librarians, such as *Book Links*, also carry articles on making picture books an integral part of the curriculum.

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While not within the scope of this book, picture books for the older child exist and flourish. Young people do not outgrow picture books even as they move on to chapter books; in fact, some picture books are appropriate only for older readers. Those for the young, including many included here, can be used with older children, especially in art and language arts classes.

TRENDS IN PICTURE BOOKS

Ever-Popular Subjects

Penguins and pirates and pink, oh my! And don't forget the chickens. These subjects abound in recent picture books. Even before the popular documentary *March of the Penguins* (2005), these birds have graced everything from pajamas and plush animals to umbrellas and jewelry. Why not children's books? *Sergio Saves the Game!* by Edel Rodriguez is just one of many, featuring a soccer-loving penguin.

With the popularity of the Pirates of the Caribbean movies and theme park, and the natural attraction to bad-boy behavior, pirates are sailing high. Many of the current books feature comical pirates who take the scary edge off these buccaneers. Books such as Colin McNaughton's *Captain Abdul's Little Treasure* highlight the bumbling pirate.

Type *pink* as a keyword in an online library catalog and see how many picture books show up. Pink is big in clothing, bedspreads, backpacks, barrettes, and anything else marketed to little girls. Whether viewed as just giving them what they want or as a product of the corporate merchandising machine, pink has made its way into picture books. *Pink Me Up* by Charise Mericle Harper stars Violet, who adores the color. Feeling the need to rebel against all things pink? *Not All Princesses Dress in Pink*, by mother-daughter team Jane Yolen and Heidi E.Y. Stemple, acknowledges the longing to be a princess without all of "that color."

Barnyard animals continue their popularity. Cows, chickens, and pigs appear in many books, often anthropomorphized. *Click Clack Moo: Cows that Type* by Doreen Cronin features cows that write letters and protest barn conditions. Pecking, laying eggs, and watching over chicks should be a full-time job for most chickens, but those in some recent picture books have taken to moving out of the henhouse (*Coriander the Contrary Hen* by Dori Chaconas), traveling on a quest (*Buffalo Wings* by Aaron Reynolds), and passing along the latest news (Megan McDonald's *Hen Hears Gossip*). A very realistic pig stars in Howard Mansfield's *Hogwood Steps Out*, where he stays true to his nature. As our society moves further away from its sources of food and many children have no idea what a working farm is like, it is good that barnyard animals remain so prevalent in children's books.

The environment and people making a difference inspire picture book creators. Books about gardening, reflecting its popularity in the adult world, adorn children's

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shelves. In Peter Brown's *The Curious Garden*, a young boy quietly sparks a revolution in his city with his concern for some plants in his neighborhood. And even garbage, or the disposal of it, makes an appearance in books such as Jonah Winter's *Here Comes the Garbage Barge!*

Picture Books about Art and Books

No doubt reflecting their own passionate feelings about art and books, authors and illustrators have created numerous picture books about these subjects. Appropriately enough, since the picture book represents the marriage of text and illustration, these books encourage the development of aesthetics and an appreciation of art and literature in the young child.

Creativity via artistic expression comes through as the theme in *The Umbrella Queen* by Shirin Yim Bridges. Others books introduce the young child to works of art through plot twists, illustration, or magical enter-the-picture adventure. Mélanie Watt's *Augustine* includes artist-inspired illustrations, which provide a bridge to art appreciation and the recognition of famous works of art. Appendix 1, "Picture Books about Art," lists books that will enhance the development of artistic sensibilities in children. As art education faces budget cuts if not total eradication in some school districts, books about art become more important than ever.

So, too, are the stories that encourage reading and the love of books. In Heather Henson's *That Book Woman*, Cal develops from regarding books as a waste of time to eagerly awaiting the next visit of the Pack Horse Librarian. *Ron's Big Mission* by Rose Blue and Corinne J. Naden ties the passion for reading into a story of a young boy's decision to stand up for his right to check out library books in the 1950s South.

Some books break through the book-reader divide by leaving the story and addressing the reader. By having characters call attention to themselves as characters and to the book as that which contains them, this device creates a postmodern picture book. In *Abe Lincoln Crosses a Creek*, author Deborah Hopkinson speaks directly to the listening audience in several places, figuratively stepping from behind the book to connect with her readers. Illustrator John Hendrix includes illustrations of a hand with a brush and with a pencil, as if the story is being illustrated while read.

In these types of books, a story may be interrupted by a character or narrator giving instructions to the reader, as in *Don't Read this Book!* by Jill Lewis, where even the title gives a clue as to the tone. In others, the entire book consists of a character or characters talking to the reader; in Jef Czekaj's *Cat Secrets*, the wall between reader and story does not exist, with the cat characters looking directly at, and speaking to, the reader.

Mélanie Watt's *Chester* and *Chester's Masterpiece* feature a plot in which the title character has wrested control of the story from the author/illustrator, and their struggle is played out in the pages of these humorous books.

In a classic example, the award-winning *The Three Pigs* by David Wiesner combines dialogue of the characters with surreal illustrations that take the characters out of the

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ongoing story to form a new story removed from the traditional tale. With pages from the original story that fly across the book into a new setting, this book is a vehicle for a postmodern Three Little Pigs.

Because these books cover a variety of topics and do not easily fit into any particular chapters, an annotated list of some recent titles is presented in appendix 2, “Self-Referential Picture Books.”

Cartoon Art

As graphic novels gain in popularity among both adults and teens, their artistic styles and conventions have filtered into picture books. Panels—one of the hallmarks of comics and the graphic novel—are used by the artist to portray actions happening in a sequence. Picture and text integrate tightly in both the graphic novel and the picture book.

Currently, the number of picture books for young children that can be called graphic novels is rather small. A company to watch is TOON Books and Little Lit Library, under the direction of Françoise Mouly and Art Spiegelman (author of *Maus*, the graphic novel for adults), which publishes graphic novels for various age levels, including the very young. Independent publisher Blue Apple Books offers graphic novels in its *Balloon Toons* series. Some mainstream publishers, too, have entered this genre, including Candlewick, which has partnered with TOON Books.

Some artists use elements of the graphic novel in their picture books. In *Otis and Rae and the Grumbling Splunk*, Leo Espinosa uses such graphic novel conventions as word and thought balloons, emotion lines, words as parts of illustrations, and panels. Taking a turn away from the humorous cartoon style, illustrator Patrick O’Brien creates richly expressive worlds on a par with adult graphic novels in Kevin O’Malley’s space fantasy *Captain Raptor and the Moon Mystery*.

Whether called cartoons, comic books, or graphic novels, this style influences children’s book illustration and bears watching.

EVALUATING PICTURE BOOKS

Text

In evaluating a picture book, one has to consider the text, the illustrations, and the interaction between them. Which is more important: the text or the art? This is not the question; both must work together seamlessly. Because of personal preference, a reader may favor the language over the artwork in a particular book, or vice versa. But critical analysis requires examination of all three factors, whether the objective is to analyze a book for a children’s literature course, to evaluate a book for classroom use, or to consider a book for storytime in the library.

Where Words and Art Come Together

Reading the text first silently and then aloud allows one to evaluate the text and to develop a feel for the sound of the book, including language, pacing, rhyme (if it exists), rhythm, and dialogue (if it is part of the story). An important point to consider: will this book hold up to repeated readings aloud? The story must be engaging, appealing to adults as well as children.

Certain subjects will probably always pop up as good material for picture books: a new baby in the house, begging for a pet, school stories, making a friend, the seasons of the year, barnyard animals.

Some books highlight a real person or event, written in a fictional manner, with imagined scenes or characters. For instance, in *The Little Piano Girl*, authors Ann Ingalls and Maryann Macdonald introduce the childhood of composer Mary Lou Williams as a fictionalized story and even give a lyrical swing to the text. Antoine Ó Flatharta's *Hurry and the Monarch*, a look at the life cycle of a butterfly, supplies animal characters with personality and dialogue and, within that fiction, presents biological facts.

Other books feature common experiences, with an author's interpretation. Gillian Shields gives a twist to the standard situation of a child who desperately wants a dog in *Dogfish*. Just as in the title, the story combines two animals by imagining how a little boy's goldfish (his mother's idea of a perfect pet) can act more like a dog. Another common childhood problem, a messy room and toys that spill out into the house, becomes fresh through exaggeration and zaniness in David Shannon's *Too Many Toys*.

Still other books present total fantasy. No child owns a whale in the real world, but a boy does in Mac Barnett's *Billy Twitters and His Blue Whale Problem*. Every page brings a new dilemma as Billy attempts to fit in at school and at play while dragging along the largest animal on earth. In a dreamy vein, *The Weaver* by Thacher Hurd takes place above earth, where the title character weaves the cloth with which she dances over many lands to protect those who are going to sleep.

Like chapter books, novels, and plays, the picture book must hook the reader with its first sentence. It can be funny, incongruous, magical, or mysterious, but it must invite the reader and listener to go on. How the story continues—fast paced, full of action, suspenseful, dreamy—should be appropriate to the plot and theme.

Then it is on to important elements within the story. Evaluate them by asking the questions and considering the aspects of the following areas:

Characters

Who is the main character? Is there more than one? What are the roles of the secondary characters? What informs the characters' actions and makes them unique? How are the characters portrayed? They may be human, animal, or inanimate object. If animal, they may act as humans, as in Nicole Rubel's *Ham and Pickles: First Day of School*. From the text alone, this book could be about human children, but the illustrations feature an

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animal girl, boy, and classmates. Or the animal characters may act true to their animal nature. In *Grandfather Buffalo*, the animals behave as buffalo would, although author Jim Arnosky allows the reader to experience the old buffalo's point of view.

In Kate McMullan's *I Stink!*, a truck takes on human characteristics, such as speech and thought. Nonmoving objects may also be anthropomorphized, as in Virginia Lee Burton's 1942 classic *The Little House*. In the same vein, the text and illustrations of *The House Takes a Vacation* by Jacqueline Davies portray a house with human characteristics.

Do the characters in the book reflect a worldwide view? Differences in ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, and gender make for a richer, more realistic story. Some books naturally include these factors as part of the story. Examples include Lenore Look's *Uncle Peter's Amazing Chinese Wedding*, where marriage traditions become an integral part of a personal story; Ellen Levine's *Henry's Freedom Box* and its portrayal of an African American slave who literally sends himself to freedom; and Reeve Lindbergh's *My Little Grandmother Often Forgets* with its three generations of a family. Others portray ethnicity through the artwork, even if it is not intrinsic to the story. *Two of a Kind* by Jacqui Robbins stars African American and Asian girls as the main characters, although this diversity is not the point of the plot. Even a simple illustration of a classroom with African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and other children helps avoid the whitewash that was once the norm in picture books.

In evaluating picture books, look for these diverse types of portrayals. In addition, books in which characters are immigrants or those that feature characters in foreign countries can broaden children's perspectives. Books should either mirror a child's experience (and *all* children should find books about themselves) or widen the child's view. The latter objective takes on even more importance if the child lives in a homogeneous neighborhood and goes to school with children who look like him or her.

Point of View/Tone/Voice

Is the story told from a character's point of view? Or is there an omniscient narrator? What is the mood of the story? What emotions are invoked? Is the story told in first, second, or third person, with first and third being the two most popular?

Setting

What is the time (contemporary, historical, or future)? What is the place (farm, city, apartment, outdoors, foreign country, etc.)? Are they indispensable to the story?

Plot

What happens in the story? What is the problem to be solved or the obstacle to be overcome? What is the outcome? The plot usually is traced as an arc, where the action builds, reaches a high point, and then tapers off to an ending.

Theme

Is there a deeper meaning to the story (for example, friendship, the security of home, love)? This does not mean that the story should be didactic or contain an obvious lesson, but that it reaches beyond simple plot.

Use of Language

Are unfamiliar words used that children will be able to understand within the context of the story? Picture books often use vocabulary above the child's reading level because the books are meant to be read aloud to the child. Even if the child is reading early readers or easy chapter books, the language in the picture book encourages the development of a larger vocabulary. This growth can be enhanced if the parent or teacher calls attention to an unfamiliar word and discusses it with the child.

Is rhyming used? Several categories of picture books incorporate rhyme or the meter of poetry. Some picture books for children consist of a collection of poems, usually about a single theme. For representative titles, see Jack Prelutsky's *There's No Place Like School* or *In the Wild* by David Elliott. Some books that successfully use rhyming text include *Little Black Crow* by Chris Raschka, Alice Schertle's *Little Blue Truck*, and *Come to the Fairies' Ball* by Jane Yolen. For books that do not use rhyming text but incorporate rhythm, pacing, or internal rhyme, see Lauren Stringer's *Winter Is the Warmest Season*, Jonah Winter's *Steel Town*, and Margaret Mahy's *Bubble Trouble*. Look closely at, and read aloud, books that seem to be nonrhyming or straight prose. The best of these use language and rhythm to create text that begs to be read out loud.

Are there elements of repetition? In Michael Ian Black's *A Pig Parade Is a Terrible Idea*, the title line repeats several times throughout the story, after each example of why a pig parade is not good. Doreen Cronin's *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type* features the repetitive sounds of typing and mooing that Farmer Brown hears from his barn, enough times that young readers could be prompted to chime in on the words.

Sometimes the author's words emphasize the repetitive action. Each instance builds the tension until success is met. In David Ezra Stein's *Interrupting Chicken*, the little chicken stops her dad's telling of three fairy tales as she enters each story to inform the characters what to do. The bulk of the book *Nine Animals and the Well* by James Rumford portrays one animal after another showing his or her gift for the raja-king to the animal that came before. The repetition combines a comfortable sense of knowing what comes next with the delicious suspense of wondering what the next animal's gift will be.

Even in stories that do not employ repetition, the sequencing of events provides the dramatic tension in the story, as each event or complication moves the story along from the introduction of the situation on the first page. In evaluating the book, note how this sequencing works as the story progresses.

Illustrations

Evaluating a picture book's artwork begins at the cover. After all, the cover offers a major selling point if displayed with that side up, either in a bookstore or library. The cover illustration may reproduce one of the pages inside, or it may illustrate a unique view of a character or scene; either way, the cover invites the reader in.

In Allen Say's *The Boy in the Garden*, a full-page illustration inside the book appears on the cover cropped, but with the central characters the same size as the inside illustration. Similarly, a cropped picture from inside becomes the back cover illustration.

Illustrated by G. Brian Karas, the front cover of Candace Fleming's *Clever Jack Takes the Cake* features Jack carrying a cake, heading out of the frame of the illustration followed by blackbirds from the story. On the back cover, only Jack's leg is visible as he exits the frame; blackbirds following him lie half out of the frame, too. These pictures do not appear inside the book, although they suggest a major plot point of the story.

The cover art of *The Silk Princess* by Charles Santore provides an example of a wrap-around illustration, with the mother and daughter of the story large on the front cover. Other characters and objects trail behind the girl, flowing over the spine and onto the back cover, where strands of silk thread stretch all the way to the edge.

An evaluation of the interior illustrations begins with a silent perusal, as the reader views the artwork with each page turn. Going through the book again without reading the text, but just concentrating on the pictures, allows closer examination.

Color

In many books, the first noticeable visual impact is that of color. The artwork may be multicolored, such as that of Wendy Anderson Halperin in Alice B. McGinty's *Thank You, World* and that of Yuyi Morales in Tony Johnston's *My Abuelita*. Or it may be a limited palette, as in Anushka Ravishankar's *Elephants Never Forget!*, where Christiane Pieper uses black and off-white with blue, and Susan Marie Swanson's *The House in the Night*, in which Beth Krommes illustrates with black and white and gold. Warm colors, such as red, orange, and yellow, or cool colors, in the green-blue-violet range, will evoke different moods and energy.

Blue can mean comfort. Jim Averbeck's *In a Blue Room*, illustrated by Tricia Tusa, stars Alice, who insists that everything around her must be blue before she can fall asleep. The last nine pages of the book, in shades of deep blue after her mother turns off the lamp, signal a change in mood and bring the story to its inevitable end. Green and brown, predominant in illustrations of the natural world, signify life (green, growing things) and even coziness. In *City Dog, Country Frog* by Mo Willems, illustrator Jon J. Muth fills the pages with green in the spring and summer sections, then green and brown and deep orange for fall. During this time, the two main characters share happy moments. When winter comes and frog is gone, the artwork feels cold in its

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grays and blues. Then spring arrives once more, and the art turns back to greens and happy times again.

In *Oh, Brother!*, a collection of poems by Nikki Grimes, a boy finds himself with an unwanted stepbrother when his mother remarries. Mike Benny's illustration for the poem "Showdown" features a red background, perfect for the confrontational nature of the text and of the artwork: the older boy staring down into the eyes of his stepbrother and pointing his finger at him. Color can also be used as a cultural indicator, as in Kate Aver Avraham's *What Will You Be, Sara Mee?* In several of Anne Sibley O'Brien's illustrations, little Sara is dressed in a traditional Korean *tolbok*, made with rainbow-striped sleeves and a red skirt.

Colors may change from one page to the next when the scene or the mood changes. Robert Ingpen's illustrations of a crowded vessel feature blues, grays, and light violets in Liz Lofthouse's *Ziba Came on a Boat*. As if clearer than her present existence, memories of her life in a war-torn land feature, in many cases, more defined and varied colors. Only toward the end of the book does life on the boat take on brighter hues as Ziba and her mother look to the future.

Line

The many variations of line and shape impact the mood, as well as the characterization and portrayal of action.

In *Sophie Peterman Tells the Truth!* by Sarah Weeks, illustrator Robert Neubecker employs bold black lines to outline the characters and to highlight certain words, indicating the mood of strong negativity toward the little brother. Compare the difference in the delicate lines of *Lost and Found* by Oliver Jeffers, a gentle story of friendship.

The horizontal line separating sky and ground in Grace Lin's *Thanking the Moon* appears in almost every page spread, indicating stability and calm. Contrast this with several scenes in Anu Stohner's *Brave Charlotte and the Wolves*, where Henrike Wilson uses diagonal lines in a forest to represent danger.

Shape

John Segal's *The Lonely Moose* combines geometric shapes with organic. The triangular mountains and pine trees coexist with the irregular shapes of the pond, animals, and deciduous trees, just as the taciturn moose coexists with the bright, bubbly bird. Artists create interesting shapes in the technique of collage with found objects. Hanoch Piven uses everyday school objects as facial features in *My Best Friend Is as Sharp as a Pencil*, such as crayons to represent the art teacher's mustache and an open book that becomes the smiling mouth of the librarian. Observe scale and proportion in evaluating, too. In Matthew Cordell's *Trouble Gum*, almost every illustration is small on each page, even tiny on some, with plenty of white space surrounding. This makes the impact of the final scene huge.

Texture

Does the art look as if it would feel like grass, or a blanket, a rock, or a furry animal hide if it were touched? The texture of the artwork, which depends on the medium and the technique used, adds to the visual style and emotional appeal. Ed Young, in Kimiko Kajikawa's *Tsunami!*, uses various materials in collage illustrations to create fields, water, and houses with touchability. The oil paint of Robert J. Blake's illustrations for *Swift* appears in daubs and lines that give an almost 3-D effect to the landscapes.

Space and Perspective

Whether the artwork appears flat and in the foreground or portrays distant objects in perspective to foreground objects will lend a distinct feel to the story.

A good example of realistic perspective can be seen in Jean Craighead George's *The Last Polar Bear*. In one illustration, illustrator Wendell Minor places a large polar bear so close to the front of the illustration that her whole body does not fit within the pages. Then, to one side of her, a snowy road stretches to the horizon, framed by telephone poles drawn closer together the farther back they go.

Many of the scenes in David Conway's *Lila and the Secret of Rain* feature landscapes that include mountains. Illustrator Jude Daly uses the technique of differing shades to show distance: houses and gardens are dark brown, distant fields are light tan, and the faraway mountains shimmer a bluish white.

Motion

Can a static illustration portray movement? Perry Nodelman in *Words about Pictures* emphatically states that it can, whether in a single image or a series of pictures in which one character is portrayed in different positions or a setting is shown with varying circumstances, implying active movement or transition through time.²

Movement across a page spread indicates the forward motion of the story, or the journey of a character from the beginning, through any problems or obstacles, on to the end. Generally, a character moves from left to right across the page spread to indicate this forward movement.

See this in Johannes Huckle's *Pip in the Grand Hotel*, in which Daniel Müller illustrates the children and the mouse chasing, following, and searching from left to right over each two-page spread.

Motion can be shown in illustrations by lines around the character or object suggesting movement, or by the portrayal of the character several times on the page, each time in a different position.

In Denise Fleming's *Buster*, a few page spreads feature four views of the title character in action. Readers and listeners readily understand from the preceding scenes and from the text that there are not four Busters, but that Buster frolicked and ran a long time throughout the day.

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Michael Emberley depicts the passage of the school year in Barbara Bottner's *Miss Brooks Loves Books! (And I Don't)*. Several pages of illustrations show school librarian Miss Brooks dressed in costume for various holidays. The accompanying text, with its phrase "all year long," reinforces the fact that all this happens over a span of months.

Composition

Composition—the way the picture is put together with color, line, shape, and texture—offers a myriad of creative possibilities. Bo R. Holmberg's *A Day with Dad* features art by Eva Eriksson in which she composes each illustration with the young boy and his father typically in the middle of the piece. On this day they spend together, they are each other's center. The tightly controlled framing of each illustration, the color pencil texture, and the muted colors with just a splash of red all work together. The composition of *Looking Like Me* by Walter Dean Myers features collages layered with shapes and photographs by illustrator Christopher Myers. Colors that pop, silhouette shapes, and the placement of these elements incorporating the text give a very active sensibility to a book full of energy and pride.

Throughout *Those Shoes* by Maribeth Boelts, illustrator Noah Z. Jones depicts Jeremy as smaller than the other characters. In some of the illustrations, Jeremy wears subdued colors that also symbolize his powerlessness over the situation—wanting the shoes that all the other boys have. But on one page, he is in the center, wearing a red shirt, and large: the page where he finds those shoes, unbelievably, at the thrift store. Later in the story, he is also depicted larger when he makes the decision to give the too-small shoes to another boy.

Media and Technique

Illustrators of artwork in children's picture books work with most media available to artists, including acrylic, oil, watercolor, gouache, tempera, pencil, ink, colored pencil, crayon, chalk, pastel, markers, charcoal, clay, found objects, paper cut or torn (in collage), and wood and linoleum (in printmaking). Artists use a variety of techniques with these media, including painting with brushes or other objects, drawing, printing, collage, photography, or etching. Many of these techniques can be done either hands-on or digitally. Illustrations may also be mixed media, in which the artist uses two or more materials.

TECHNOLOGY

As it has in almost every other field, technology has changed aspects of children's literature. With the advent of the Web in the early 1990s, authors and illustrators embraced this new way of introducing themselves and their work, and publishers took to this outlet for marketing their books. Most authors and illustrators of picture

Artistic Styles

For those who wish to pursue a more detailed analysis of illustrations or learn more about artistic techniques, the suggested resources section at the end of this book contains several good titles, especially those by Shulevitz, Salisbury, and the Withrows. The following styles refer to recognized characteristics in the work of an artist.

Abstract art: The artist uses form and color only as a means of portraying mood in this style. Simple forms and geometric shapes are common. Reality may not enter into what is perceived, although the figures may be recognizable. In his picture book *John Coltrane's Giant Steps*, Chris Raschka employs abstract shapes to depict a box, a snowflake, and raindrops. The kitten that appears is identifiable, but this little animal, too, is all bold black line and shape. An improvisation that is perfect for a book about a jazz classic!

Cartoon art: Nonsensical, preposterous, or exaggerated, these illustrations can run the gamut from mildly amusing to laugh-out-loud funny, from simple to full of details. The popularity of the graphic novel for all ages has brought added prestige for cartoon art. Steven Kellogg, a master of the detailed cartoon, uses this style to great advantage in *The Pied Piper's Magic*. The illustrations containing people, even crowds, feature a great variety of comical facial expressions and poses. Nothing sinister here; even the pictures of rats overrunning the town show a silliness and exaggeration helped along by sunny colors and kaleidoscopic swirls.

Expressionistic art: To communicate the emotion of what is depicted, expressionistic illustrations go beyond reality. Feeling is more important than direct reproduction. Enjoy the carefree, almost wild lines employed by Marjorie Priceman in Kitty Griffin's *The Ride: The Legend of Betsy Dowdy*. There is no doubt as to the emotions on display in each illustration as Betsy goes from worry to determination to fear to exhaustion to relief. The lines and colors mirror this ride.

Folk art: This style arises from the culture portrayed. The art matches the sensibilities and characteristics of a particular ethnic group or nationality. Ben Hodson, the illustrator of Janet Ruth Heller's *How the Moon Regained Her Shape*, uses traditional Native American motifs to illustrate the story and as borders on each page.

Impressionistic art: These illustrations feature a soft undefined line, light, and colors that mix into each other. Not crisp or realistic, the pictures convey just an impression of a scene. In Gloria Whelan's *Yatandou*, the people, buildings, and tools by illustrator Peter Sylvada appear indistinct, although the eye can tell what they are. The texture of the color and the contrast of light and dark enhance the mood of this courageous story.

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Naive art: The naive style may look as if the illustrator never learned artistic technique, yet its very simplicity captures the emotion of each scene. Bright and unnatural colors are often used, with no sophisticated perspective aspect. Lynn Rowe Reed employs naive art in *Oliver, the Spaceship, and Me*. Her painted characters exhibit a childlike innocence and sense of fun, with googly eyes, dots for teeth, and curvy hairstyles.

Realistic art: As the name suggests, this artwork represents people, places, and objects as close to reality as possible. For an example, look to Lois Lowry's *Crow Call*, wherein illustrator Bagram Ibatoulline portrays characters and settings of the 1940s. His people look lifelike in face and body. Details such as wisps of hair, curved fingers, the set of a mouth, and the bend of a knee are ultrarealistic. How appropriate for the story of a girl and her father reconnecting after he has been to war.

books maintain personal websites as a way to reach out to their audience. In some cases, a website for an individual title may be created. Teachers and librarians can find some great information for author studies and classroom activities on the sites. Cynthia Leitich Smith's website (www.cynthialeitichsmith.com), well organized and easy to use, includes teacher guides for her books as well as information, interviews, and "blogbuzz." Packed with resources, Jan Brett's site (www.janbrett.com) features activities, including bulletin boards and "how to draw" videos. In addition to entering individual's names in a search engine to find their sites, lists of author and illustrator websites with links can be found on compiled websites, such as one page in the American Library Association's Great Websites for Kids (gws.ala.org).

In order to connect personally with their readers and publicize their work, picture book authors and illustrators may use social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter. Some maintain blogs or post YouTube videos. These outlets, unimagined a few years ago, provide information for librarians, teachers, and others keeping up with favorite authors and artists on their existing works and upcoming titles.

Taking technology to a core audience for picture books, some websites provide digital children's books. One of the best known is the International Children's Digital Library (<http://en.childrenslibrary.org>), with more than 4,000 books from around the world in fifty-five languages. Children's librarians seeking picture books in a child's native language, teachers investigating multicultural themes, or parents looking for additional sources of books can view these full text volumes; the site also makes available apps to download the books to an iPhone or an iPad.

Digital Illustration

An area where technology has changed the very making of the picture book is illustration. An artist can now create a picture book illustration entirely on a computer.

The Picture Book

More common is the process in which the artist draws by hand, digitally scans that drawing, then uses software to select and add color, change the size, add layers, create texture, and complete the illustration digitally. This software enables illustrators to create art that looks as if it were produced using their favorite media or technique, painted with a specific kind of brush, for example, or on a certain type of textured paper. Some artists draw with a pen and graphics tablet, which preserves the hands-on artistic technique but takes advantage of the technology by producing the drawing on a computer rather than a piece of paper. Collage illustrations can be created using Photoshop. Found objects, photographs, and items from nature can be manipulated and layered with the other elements of the composition.

Working digitally allows the illustrator to edit, change, and try out ideas without permanently committing them to paper. The copyright page of the book often states what media were used in the illustrations of a picture book. Check there to see if digital techniques were part of the process.

E-Books and Apps

Where do picture books fit into a world bursting with e-books? Dedicated devices for adult books and children's books without illustrations are great for their purpose, but when Apple introduced the iPad, followed by Barnes & Noble's NookColor, picture books as e-books became possible. These devices allow the view of a page spread instead of one page at a time, absolutely necessary for picture books. They also make possible the ability to display in color, another must.

An adult can read picture books on e-readers or tablets to a child, or can activate the option to have it read by a narrator. The books can be read on an e-reader, tablet, or smartphone. For large groups, the librarian or teacher can connect the iPad to a projector. Words that pop up as they are read, animation in the illustrations, entertaining music, the ability to bookmark a page—all these make the e-book fun and can enhance literacy instruction.

E-books are generally available in a format such as EPUB or PDF, two of the most popular. Apps refer to the applications, or software, that are downloaded. An app to read e-books may be downloaded to an e-reader. Or apps that are e-books can be downloaded; these books are more interactive, allowing children to do more with the story, such as tapping or clicking on objects within scenes. Additional activities, including coloring and games, or features such as changing to a different language, may also be part of the package.

More than two-thirds of public libraries now make e-books accessible to their patrons, and just over a quarter offer access to e-book readers.³

For libraries considering the purchase of e-readers, price is of course a concern, but so is possible obsolescence of the device in a few years. E-reader technology is changing rapidly. As for e-books themselves, availability of titles is an issue. Will every new

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picture book also be available as an e-book? Licensing is still being hammered out, as are digital rights management (DRM) issues such as who owns electronic rights and questions of access, including number of checkouts allowed, whether simultaneous checkouts are permitted, and interlibrary loan.

New developments in e-books, e-readers, and apps are emerging. Look for new products and applications in the months and years ahead.

USING THIS BOOK

Mirroring the child's social development, this book begins with the child's personal concerns and family relationships and then moves out into the community and on into the larger world. A chapter on imaginative books is included, followed by one containing folktales and fairy tales. Each chapter gathers a variety of outstanding books with wonderful stories and beautiful illustrations.

So open this book to read about some of the best in recent children's picture books. Then open a picture book with a child and enter the world where words and art come together.

Notes

1. Zena Sutherland, *Children and Books* (New York: Longman, 1997), 119.
2. Perry Nodelman, *Words About Pictures* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1988), 159.
3. Judy Hoffman, John Carlo Bertot, Denise M. Davis, and Larra Clark, *Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2010–2011*. Digital supplement of *American Libraries*, June 2011. Available at <http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/857ea9fd>. 7, 24.

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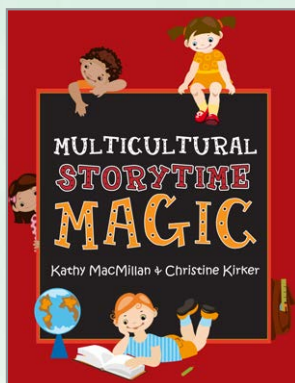
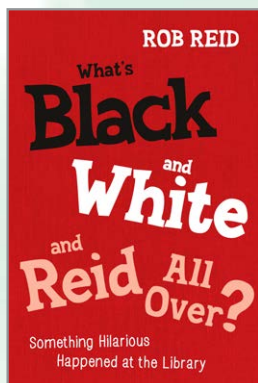
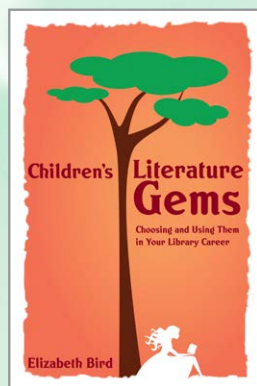
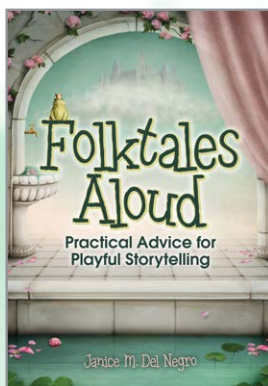
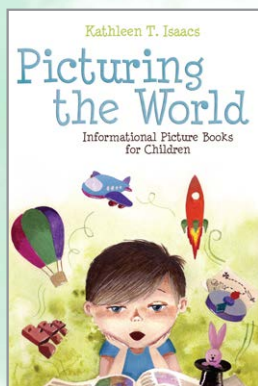
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