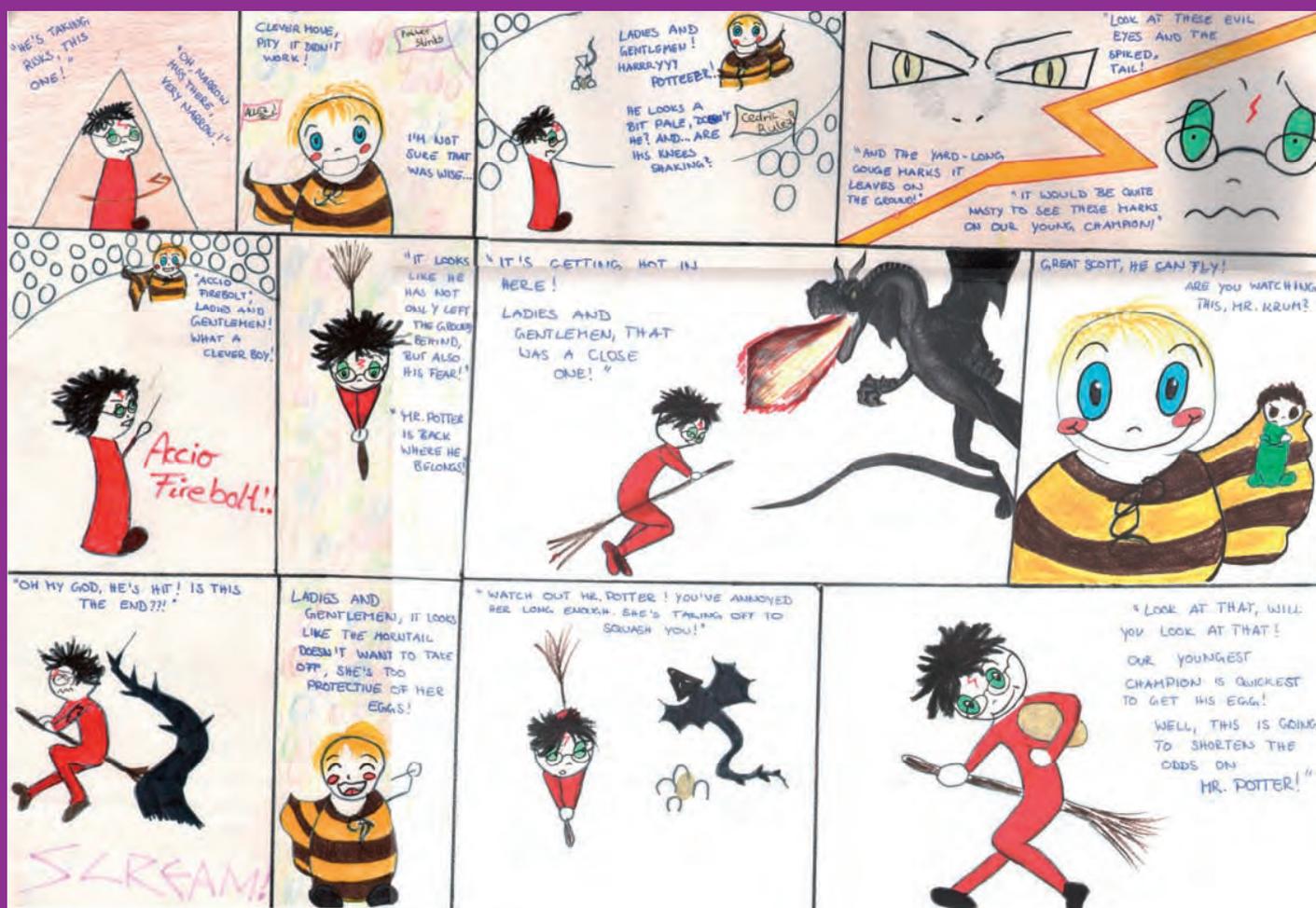


# YOUNG LEARNERS & TEENAGERS

## C&TS: Children & Teenagers

THE PUBLICATION OF THE YOUNG LEARNER AND TEENAGER SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP



Spring 2011 Issue 1/11

Picturebooks, Comics and Graphic Novels

- Sandie Mourão – Picturebooks are for Children and Teenagers
- Graham Stanley – Animate your Kids and Teenagers with Comics: Tips for using Digital
- Eva Gressnich – Language Development and Shared Picturebook Reading
- Janice Bland – Graphic Novels in the literature EFL classroom: *Coraline*
- Jamie Gibbings – Exploring Diversity through Children's Literature
- Janet Evans – You Can Never Be Too Old For Picturebooks

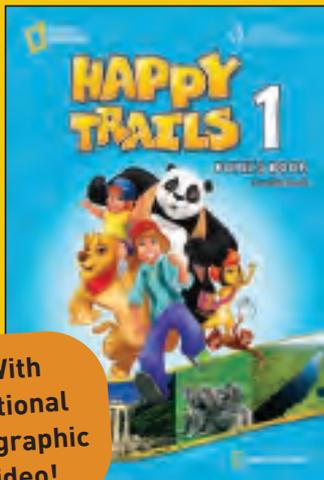


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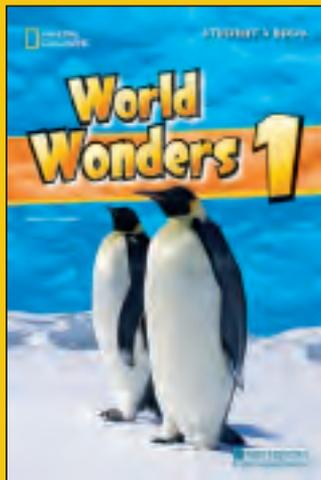
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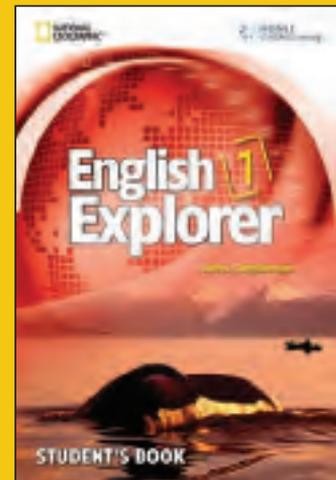
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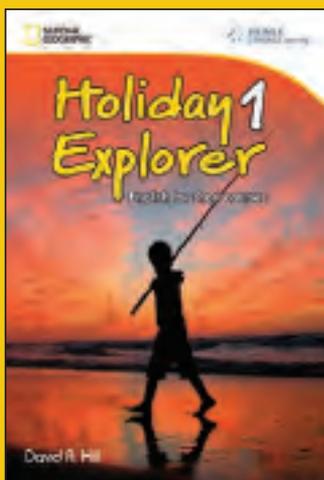
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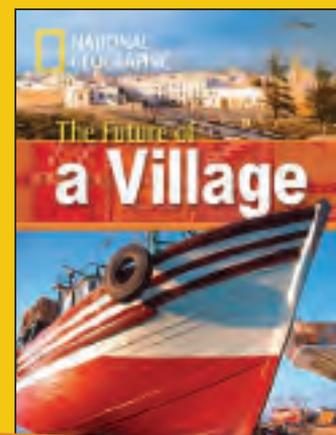
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The YLT SIG would like to thank Janet Crossley (co-editor), who has now moved on from our ranks. I'd also like to thank a group of my student teachers for allowing me to use their "Harry Potter" comic picture for the front cover of C&TS!

Best wishes from the YLT SIG, and we hope you enjoy this issue.

**Janice Bland**

## *From the Editor*

Welcome to the first issue of C&TS in 2011: *Picturebooks, Comics & Graphic Novels*.

If you want to find out why 'picturebook' is spelled as one word, please go ahead and read this issue. The contributors Sandie Mourão, Eva Gressnich and Janet Evans are all experts in this area. Each contributor approaches the subject in a different way, but all point out the complexity of picturebooks and how some titles can be very suitable also and even particularly for teen readers. Sandie opens the field with: "Picturebooks are greatly misunderstood and for this reason I'd like to clarify exactly what a picturebook is". Eva's paper outlines how "picturebooks can serve as input for a child reader learning the syntax of a language". Janet's paper is solely on the L1 context, but nonetheless offers useful and fascinating insights into how 11-year-old fluent readers also value picturebooks.

Jamie Gibbings illustrates the affordances of children's literature for learning empathy and tolerance. Graham Stanley points the reader to many digital resources for creating comics – sure to be a hit with young learners and teens. Finally I have tried to set down for you what exactly a 'graphic novel' is, and why we should be using them to motivate our teen readers.

When you have finished reading the print version of C&TS, do go to the YLT SIG website to find the digital version. It's far more colourful – just right for **picturebooks, comics and graphic novels** – and you will find it very easy to download and save individual contributions.

There are several pages of book reviews in this issue, to help you find just the right book for your needs and context.

### **Dennis introduces a new committee member:**

At this pre-conference time I'd like to tell you a happy, motivating story of how things can work on the internet, online and within IATEFL when one is lucky enough to happen on an active, enthusiastic member. A couple of years ago I did a 'tutorial' online for the electronic list *teachingwithcomputers* on How to Use Second Life. One very enthusiastic member of the course, who was always volunteering to do things, was one Helen Davies. If I remember correctly, she then turned up on the Cardiff online discussion forum and during the informal part of our discussions I managed to persuade her to become a member of IATEFL and the YLTSIG. Within months she was shadowing me as Discussions Moderator. She contributes regularly to the electronic discussion list and was extremely supportive when I launched the Ning for LYTSIG. She is one of the few people, along with Nik Peachey, who post messages with the YLTSIG hash tag #yltsig. (Hands up those who know what a hash tag is and why using it is important). As I write, she is trying to persuade the YLTSIG committee to create its very own Tweet address. Thanks a lot Helen.

**Dennis**

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[www.iatefl.org](http://www.iatefl.org) (IATEFL website)

## Flat CATS: Creativity in YLT

### YLT SIG PCE in Brighton

Our PCE this year looks at the topic of Creativity in the YLT classrooms, books and teacher training courses. Throughout the day we will ask ourselves *What is creativity?* How is it possible to implement as a regular feature? The topic and the form of the day was stimulated by the book *Flat Stanley* by Jeff Brown and by Canadian Dale Hubert's ingenious Flat Stanley Project ([www.flatstanley.com](http://www.flatstanley.com)).

This year our PCE is three-dimensional:

- Firstly, an online discussion moderated and organised by Dennis Newson takes place. Our guest online fielders are Nik Peachey and Susan Hillyard.
- Then we all meet here in Brighton to share thoughts and experiences whilst attending sessions. Presentations this year are given by the committee: Janice Bland, Helen Emery, Chris Etchells, Niki Joseph, Caroline Linse and Hans Mol. Annie Broadhead from Cambridge ESOL will be joining us.
- There is also a panel where Kay Bentley, Sandie Mourão and Carol Read will share their thoughts on creativity.

This unusual PCE ends with Flat Cats being released to the wider world! Participants will take home their Flat Cat, which will then begin a voyage of discovery throughout YLT classrooms all over the world. The Flat Cats will be back to report in Glasgow in 2012. See you there!

A huge thank you to Cambridge ESOL for kindly sponsoring this event.

10.00 – 10.10 Niki Joseph Introduction

10.10 – 11.00 Janice Bland  
*C&TS= Creativity & Thinking Strategies*

11:00 – 11.15 Coffee

11.15 – 12.00 Chris Etchells  
*Digital Photography: creative CLIL in action*

12.00 – 13.00 Creative panel – moderated by Hans Mol with **Panel guests** Kay Bentley, Sandie Mourão Carol Read

13.00 – 14.00 **Lunch**

14.00 – 14.30 Helen Emery  
*Creating inspirational materials with student teachers*

14.30 – 15.15 Annie Broadhead (Cambridge ESOL)  
*Web-based activities for young language learners – for classrooms without computers!*

15.15 – 15.30 **Tea**

15.30 – 16.15 Caroline Linse  
*Creating Language-Rich Arts and Crafts Projects*

16.15- 17.00 Niki Joseph and the YLTSIG committee  
**RELEASE OF THE FLAT CATS**

## Picturebooks are for children and teenagers

**Sandie Mourão**

**This contribution to C&Ts aims to persuade readers that picturebooks are for all learners,**

**not just the younger ones. Picturebooks are greatly misunderstood and for this reason I'd like to clarify exactly what a picturebook is, discuss a title not normally associated with learning English and provide a framework for using such a picturebook with older students. I hope to persuade more of you to reap the benefits picturebooks can bring to all our classrooms – from pre-school right up to teens and young adults.**

### **Picturebooks in ELT: a muddle of terms**

Picturebooks have been present in primary ELT for the last two decades. If I pull Brumfit et al (1991), from my shelf, Machura describes her journey through a number of different books for children, finally using real books, which she describes as "original texts ... using them for sheer enjoyment rather than linguistic gains." (1991:72) In the same publication Parker & Parker also write a chapter about using a "real book approach" to reading in a second language classroom, again emphasizing authentic, original texts (1991:179). Next to Brumfit et al I have Ellis & Brewster (2002), who describe using a story-based approach, most of the stories come from "authentic storybooks". In a folder nearby I have my treasured collection of original "REAL BOOK NEWS", edited and published by Dunn from 1997 till 2004. Here she describes "story picture books" and "real picture books". "Real books" appear subsequently in Cameron (2001) and Mourão (2003). Finally, in Enever & Schmid-Schönbein (2006), an edited collection resulting from a conference in Munich, we see the term "picture book". All the authentic literature I have named here – real books, storybooks, story picture books and real picture books – are *picturebooks* and if we want to take these books seriously I propose we use their proper name, picturebooks, they are after all a recognised genre of children's literature.

### **What is a picturebook?**

Authenticity is key in the definition, as seen from references above, but it does not suffice. The definition I like most and which is used widely in the field of children's literature comes from Bader:

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 page. On its own terms its possibilities are limitless. (Bader 1976:1)

Bader uses the compound noun, picturebook, reflecting the "compound nature of the artefact itself" (Lewis 2001:xiv), and picturebook has become a legitimate neologism over the last decade, and this is the spelling I have chosen to use in this article.

## **Unravelling the definition**

### **1. The pictures and the words**

Picturebooks are *compound* in nature because they are dependent upon pictures and words together to create meaning: it is the *interdependence* of what the pictures show and the words tell that makes these books so special. This *interdependence* creates a picture-word dynamic ranging from a simple showing and telling of the same information to a more complex showing and telling of different, even contradicting information. This variation can be seen in single picturebooks, demonstrating how flexible they are in nature.

Generally in ELT we select and use picturebooks, which contain a simple picture-word relationship, with illustrations that synchronize with the text (Ellis & Brewster 2002), providing a secure, supportive learning context. We focus more on the words, often working with concept books that contain predictable and repetitive, cumulative refrains, and pictures that please the eye but give little extra information.

More complex picture-word dynamics resulting in more sophisticated, often multi-layered, picturebooks are less likely to be selected for our classrooms. However these titles are far more challenging to our students, who need to infer characters' motivations and thoughts and relate cause with effect, as well as piece puzzles together and discover meaning. These picturebooks, which also contain a richer repertoire of vocabulary, expand our students' lexical knowledge as well as enhance oral comprehension. The fact that these kinds of picturebooks can provide multiple opportunities for interpretation, resulting in discussion and language use, makes them very suitable and for older students who will have a little more language baggage and a better understanding of the world around them.

### **2. And the design?**

Bader's definition includes design alongside pictures and words. The design of a picturebook, that is the parts of the book considered peripheral in most adult literature, are deliberately put to use, so that a picturebook becomes "integrated into a single organic entity whose parts are in harmony with each other and the whole." (Shulevitz, 1985: 54). Publishers bring together the skills of the illustrator, author, editor and designer to make use of the format, front and back covers, endpapers, title pages, copyright and dedication pages, so that they all articulate with the pictures and the words to produce a unified end product. If we skip over these parts of a picturebook in our classes, we may be omitting vital information contributing to the meaning making process we engage in while sharing a picturebook. In neglecting the peritextual features we also omit the use of meta-language for talking about and discussing these parts. It is by commenting and modelling noticing, that we can instil in our students a curiosity, which fuelled by returning to the books will result in enjoyment of using these features to make meaning.

### 3. A social, cultural, historic document

Picturebooks cover a variety of socially, culturally, and historically appropriate material for the language classroom dealing with a myriad of themes, and of course bringing the cultures of many Englishes to our classrooms through the words and pictures they contain. This makes them an excellent springboard for expanding students' understanding of a topic as well as motivating and supporting them to look beyond their own worlds and positively experience others. For the younger learner many cultural nuances go unnoticed, the common themes covering animals, body parts, clothes, transports, farms and zoos, as well as dinosaurs and witches, princes and princesses make picturebooks both appropriate and suitable as part of a learning curriculum, but are often used solely to reinforce topics children may already be studying. The titles you are more familiar with are probably, *Brown bear, brown bear what do you see?* (Martin Jr. and Carle), *The very hungry caterpillar* (Carle), *The Gruffalo* (Donaldson & Scheffler), *Ketchup on your cornflakes* (Sharratt), *Where's Spot?* (Hill), and *Meg and Mog* (Nicoll & Pienkowski) amongst others. These are all well loved picturebooks, and used again and again in our classrooms. They cover the topics we feel safe with. They contain repetitive refrains and the pictures support the words in such a way that

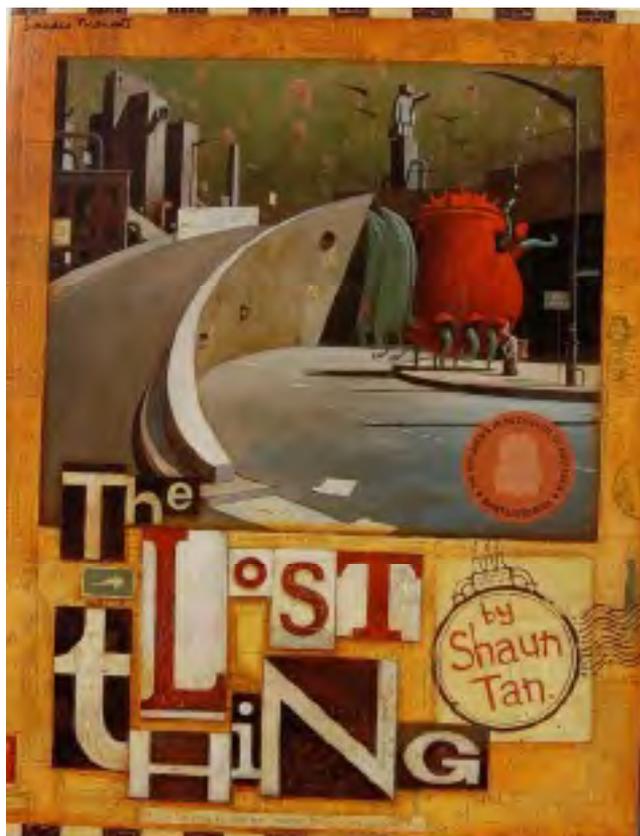
there is little more to see than that which is told. That is good, it helps our learners, especially the younger ones, it gives them confidence to listen to an English picturebook, giving them that all-important *I can!* feeling at the end.

However there are titles that, in showing us more through the pictures than the words, we are left with gaps for personal interpretations. These kinds of picturebooks often leave us with more questions than answers and can involve our students in a critical and questioning approach to learning. Picturebooks like these help students understand the importance of looking for information and striving to complete a puzzle. These picturebooks bring such topics as chauvinism, bullying, equality, and disability, to mention but a few, into our classrooms and it is usually through the pictures that children can access other interpretations of what we take for granted. By using these types of picturebooks we are providing our students with tools to begin challenging social constructs.

### Picturebooks for older learners

In published literature supporting the use of picturebooks, there are an increasing number of titles which contain more complex picture-word dynamics, providing multi-layered readings, covering more demanding topics suitable for the upper primary age groups: *Princess Smartypants* (Cole) and *Something Else* (Cave & Riddell) are included in Ellis & Brewster (2002) and provide important early steps in being critical about the world, looking at gender roles and tolerance respectively. More recently a set of resources on the British Council Teach English website also features titles which demand a more critical and questioning approach, these include *Tusk Tusk* (McGee), a puzzling book about hatred and war and respecting differences, and *Susan Laughs* (Willis & Ross), about a child in a wheel chair.

In addition to these online materials, I have begun a blog, which does not provide activities as such, but focuses on different picturebook titles emphasising the pictures and what they can bring to the learning equation. I discuss many titles including those suitable for older children and several are for teenagers. Examples are *Piggybook* (Browne) touching on male chauvinism, *Yo! Yes* (Raschka) dealing with friendship and diversity and *The Red Tree* (Tan), a title that can be used to talk about teenage emotions.



Another title, also by Tan, and one I'd like to discuss a little here is *The Lost Thing*, subtitled *A tale for those who have more important things to pay attention to*. The main character, a young boy, narrates a matter of fact summer holiday story about finding a metaphorical "lost thing" – a huge, teapot-like creature with crab claws that acts like a pet dog.

It all happened a few summers ago, one rather ordinary day by the beach. Not much was going on. I was, as usual, working tirelessly on my bottle-top collection and stopped to look up for no particular reason. That's when I first saw the thing. (*The Lost Thing*)

The story is of the journey he takes to find a home for the creature, and it leaves us questioning our very existence.

The illustrations are full of detail and thought provoking, in particular when seen alongside the minimal, fairly dry text. Tan used his father's old physics textbooks to make the backgrounds, and they bring a wonderfully sunburned brown, textured feel to the pages, as well as hundreds of reasons to keep looking and pouring over the illustrations. The peritext is used eccentrically: the front and back covers are full of clues as to what the book will bring, but many of these clues

only become clear once we've *read* through the picturebook more than once. Most spreads have a comic-book-like layout, with several frames on a page illustrating different sequential events. Tan uses very moody colours, dark browns and reds, with grey and black, against the cream coloured physics notes, but every now and then, even though the colours themselves don't change, something becomes luminous, bringing a light-heartedness to a page.

After some weird and thought-provoking adventures wondering around suburbia following signs with arrows, the boy does find a home for the Lost Thing. It "...seemed to be the right place, in a dark little gap off some anonymous little street. The sort of place you'd never know existed unless you were actually looking for it." This "right place" is a Dali-like world, with buildings resembling aqueducts, in a warm amber, and every space is filled with weird creatures, all different but all happily together. The boy leaves the creature there and goes "home to classify his bottle top collection". On the facing page we read: "Well, that's it. That's the story. Not especially profound, I know, but I never said it was. And don't ask me what the moral is."

But the final spread shows us the boy who is now a man. He is changed and is much like the other characters in the illustrations – black coat, hat, blank stare. We see the man-once-boy in a bus, and through the comic-book-like sequence, one bus becomes three, then twenty, then sixty. Everyone and everything is the same. These words close the story:

I see that sort of thing less and less these days though. Maybe there aren't that many lost things around anymore.

Or maybe I've just stopped noticing them. Too busy doing other stuff, I suppose. (*The Lost Thing*)

### Book talk and the "Tell me" approach

There are many directions to be taken from sharing such a picturebook with a group of teenagers / young adults, and additionally, you may consider buying the film (see below). Tan collaborated with the filmmakers creating a 15-minute film, which literally brings his picturebook to life – it also makes it easier to show a large class full of students. But do make sure your students browse through the book too: they are two distinct experiences.

The direction I'd like to pursue is discussion. How do you get your students to talk about what they have read and seen? It's important to let your students decide what they want to talk about, and to do this successfully I'd like to suggest that the "tell me" approach (Chambers, 1983) be of use as a guide here, by helping students together decide on what can and should be talked about, their participation will be more authentic and natural.

Try following this sequence of events:

### Stage 1 – reading and re-reading

1. Before reading the picturebook, ask the students to predict what the book is about. This can be done individually or in groups. It can be done orally or in written notes – the latter is often a good support for post-reading discussion.
2. Read the book (or show the film) to the group.
3. Ask the students in pairs to talk about their predictions and whether they were correct or not.
4. Read the book again, all the way through.

### Stage 2 – thinking and re-thinking

What's important about the ideas in the "tell me" approach is that the topics chosen for discussion come from the readers as a group rather than from the teacher or another dominant person.

5. To decide what to highlight ask the students to think about four questions:

- a) Was there anything you liked about this book?
- b) Was there anything you disliked about this book?
- c) Was there anything that puzzled you?
- d) Did you notice any patterns or connections?

6. Students list their thoughts in groups
7. Conduct a whole class feedback, starting with question a)
8. Students give their ideas in short, one word if possible, statements
9. Write their ideas in four columns on the board; use their words, if you aren't sure use "Do you mean... or do you mean...?"
10. Once the lists are completed, together identify any topics included in more than one column.
11. Join these topics using lines (drawn to and from)
12. Together decide which topic has most lines.
13. Use this as a topic for discussion.

### Stage 3 – discussing

The discussion:

- Ask each student who suggested a linked entry to say a little more.
- Begin with likes and dislikes, move to puzzles and only look at patterns last.

Chambers (1983:77) reminds us that, "it is the discovery of patterns, and the reasons for them, that leads to the interpretive understanding of a [story or] text, or a particular aspect of it". By organizing the students' thoughts in such a way, we are helping them make meaning and showing how this meaning is found. As teachers and mediators we can ask questions, but they need to be open-ended questions. There is no right answer. Questions should come naturally, and many will be generated from the questions the students pose. Chambers (p. 83-92) divides questions into two types: general questions and special questions.

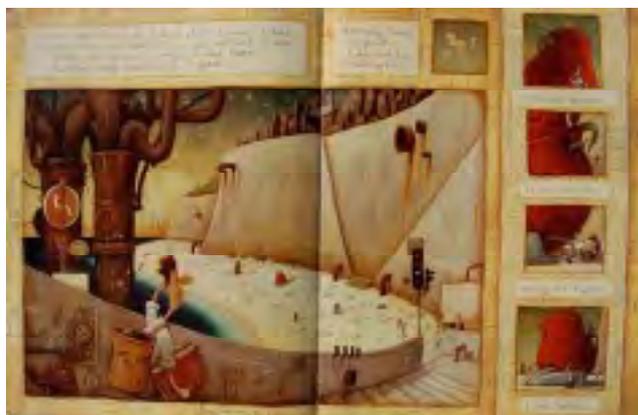
### Tell me: general questions

- What caught your attention?
- Did anything bore / interest / surprise you?
- Was there anything you thought strange?
- Have you read any other stories like this? How is it different? How is it the same?
- Were you surprised by anything your friends said?
- What would you tell your friends about the book?
- What is the most important thing about this book for you?

### Tell me: special questions

These are book specific, and help students move towards discovering features they hadn't noticed before. Examples are:

- How long do you think it took the story to happen? – this helps students understand how time affected the events and characters in the story, which in turn provides clues to the underlying meaning of the text.
- Whose story is it? – this helps students consider the social relationships in a story
- Which character interested you most? / least? – this helps highlight differing views among the readers about people and how they behave.
- Where did the story happen? – this question highlights the importance of place, and you could also discuss whether place mattered in the story.
- When did it happen? – by asking whether it was in the here and now, or in the past, we can help students focus on whether it is realistic or imaginary.



### The teacher's role:

- Bring the readers back to the original text by asking "How do you know that?"
- Be ready to ask general questions that will help develop talk.
- Be ready to ask book specific questions.
- Now and then, sum up what seems to have been said so that everyone has a chance to remember – help the discussion find a destination.

Done properly the tell me approach provides opportunities for discussion and challenges the students to think for real, speak for real and write for real. They are also learning to look, and in focussing on the visual all students are being given an equal opportunity to interpret and talk about what they see. This approach does not focus on language but on interpretation through language. It may therefore be necessary to help students with language in a CLIL-like manner, so that they can feel at ease as they talk. Phrases like the following may be useful:

### Predicting

- I think it will be a [funny] book.
- It is about [a boy].
- The [boy] is going to ...

### Verifying

- I was right / wrong.
- I guessed some of the book / 50%.

### Comparing

- It's like a [mystery story].
- It reminds me of [a film I saw].
- Something similar happened to me.
- I saw a film like that.
- I read a book like that.

### Extending

- If I was [the boy] I would ...
- Perhaps he [became a librarian].

### Appreciating

- I like the [colours] because ...
- I like the way [the illustrations look like cartoons]

### Wondering

- Why did he [stop seeing lost things]?
- I wonder why [everyone looks the same]?

### Concluding thoughts

I have mentioned a number of picturebooks in this article, and possibly titles you are either unfamiliar with or which you have not considered using in your classrooms. Picturebooks contribute to developing positive attitudes towards language learning, literature and the world around us. I hope I have convinced you that they provide appropriate, authentic learning affordances, resulting in authentic responses and language use for all our students, young and old.

I would like to acknowledge Janet Evans for prompting me to reconsider the "Tell Me" approach for an ELT context.

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The lost thing film: <http://www.shauntan.net/film1.html>

and you can order the film from Australia:

<http://www.madman.com.au/catalogue/view/13969/the-lost-thing>

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# YLT SIG SYMPOSIUM at 45<sup>th</sup> Annual International IATEFL conference BRIGHTON 2011

## *Picturebooks in ELT*

17.04.2011 16.10 – 18.40 Room 9

Convenors: Janice Bland & Sandie Mourão

Picturebooks are multimodal objects, where image, word and design come together to provide abundant opportunities for authentic language use. They can be used in various ELT contexts, from pre-school and primary through teens to young adults and teacher education. This symposium will bring together presentations that include reflections on research and practice in relation to the use of picturebooks in our classrooms.

### **1 Sandie Mourão Introduction: the what and the why of picturebooks**

Sandie will introduce the symposium defining the picturebook and looking at how pictures and words can come together in different ways to create a narrative.

### **2 Teresa Fleta Evidence of English L2 learning through picturebooks**

On the basis of longitudinal data from four child learners collected over a period of four school years, Teresa will demonstrate that a series of stages can be identified in children's interlanguage and that after four years children are able to retell picturebook stories. Teresa will discuss the pedagogical implications of using picture books for content and language teaching and learning.

### **3 Annett Schaefer From reading pictures to understanding a story in the L2**

How do young learners respond to a picturebook they encounter for the first time? This presentation reports on storytelling with *The Smartest Giant in Town* for learners aged 8 to 9 years. Annett explores the question how children decode pictures to make sense of the story and discusses how this can pave the way for vocabulary learning.

### **4 Gail Ellis Promoting diversity through children's literature**

Diversity and citizenship is now a major component in curriculums around the world nurturing in pupils the skills to address and understand issues of tolerance and to deal with differences. Gail will demonstrate how picturebooks offer an ideal resource for raising awareness of diversity either explicitly through the story content or as a springboard to linking related diversity themes. She will discuss criterion selection and describe four different teacher roles for promoting diversity.

### **5 Janice Bland Picturebooks in ELT: bridging primary and secondary**

With this concluding presentation Janice suggests that the theory of literature in education should be one of the analytical frameworks to connect L2 teaching across the years from the primary to the secondary classroom. Janice briefly outlines how a bridge might be spanned and a continuum might be achieved from the first literary texts in the primary language classroom, picturebooks, via graphic novels to the important narrative medium of film.

The symposium will end with discussion and questions from the audience.

# Animate your Kids and Teenagers with Comics

Tips for using digital comic sites with young learners

**Graham Stanley**

We now live in a world where it's getting more difficult to persuade our young learners to read and write in English. One way to motivate learners to do so is by using digital comic sites, which are readily found online, and which are usually easy-to-use. In this article, I'll be taking a look at a number of these sites and suggesting some ways you can use them with your learners. *Animating your learners has never been so easy!*

## Strip Cartoons

Cartoon strips can be a great source of reading or writing. Here are a few sites that are popular with English language learners.

● **Grammarman comics** are specifically aimed at non-native learners of English and are suitable for teenagers. They can be found online at <http://www.grammarmancomic.com/>. Some of the comics come with their own audio files and there are teachers' notes for others. This makes them ideal for use on an IWB (interactive whiteboard) or if you have a computer room. If you don't have access to a connected classroom (i.e. one with a computer(s) and Internet access), then you could either set one of the cartoons for homework or download / print them off for use in class.

The majority of digital comic sites are for creating cartoons, and these are best used with learners in a computer room. There are lots to choose from, so here are a few with some reasons why you might choose one over the other:

● **Bitstrips** (<http://www.bitstrips.com>) allows you to make online comic strips easily and to share them with others. They have a version for schools, but you have to pay for this <http://www.bitstripsforschools.com/>, although you can try it out with a 30-day free trial. The backgrounds and characters are lively and it is very easy for younger learners to use.



### ● Makebeliefs Comix

(<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/comix.php>) is similar to **Bitstrips**, but is probably more suitable for older (12+) learners. It is very easy to use, requires no registration and the instructions how to use the comic software are in English on the same page as the comic software. There is an interesting teacher's guide on the site with lots of ideas how to make use of the software.

● **Toondo** (<http://www.toondoo.com/>) is another excellent site, and it's probably the easiest to use, but, unlike **Bitstrips** and **Makebeliefs Comix**, it requires you to have an account. I should point out that this is not a bad thing, especially if you want the cartoons saved for future use.



Ultimately, you'll make your mind up which one is best for you, but what about how best to use these sites with young learners? One idea, illustrated above is to ask the learners to pick their favourite joke in English and to illustrate it with a comic. Then you can print out the results and display them on the classroom wall. Another idea would be to illustrate a story that the learners have already written. As with all of the sites suggested in this article, it is best to have a clear reason for using them in mind before the hands-on session. If you don't, then you risk your students spending all of their time messing around with the software rather than practising the language.

## Animated Cartoons

Strip cartoons are fun, but making animated films with learners is way more motivating. This used to be unthinkable, but has now been made very easy due to a number of different easy-to-make cartoon sites. You can go to these for one-off lessons, such as the example *Making a Film* lesson below, or you can use them as the basis of a longer project. A project that takes a look at the world of films works well. You could start by covering the language of films (see the *Film vocabulary* idea below) and finish up by holding your own film festival after the students have all made the films. If you really want to go to town, then have a screening of the films, ask the students to vote for the best, and conduct your own 'Oscars' award ceremony, complete with speeches and prizes.



If you are going to do a project, a good site to use is *DVolver Moviemaker*. It's fun animated film-making software that is very user-friendly.

Here are two ideas how to make good use of it with pre-teen or young teenage students.

The first looks at film vocabulary, which is present in the *Dvolver Moviemaker* menus. It probably works best for teenagers. More than a lesson plan, this is a help sheet for you the teacher to use before you use the programme. If you ask the students to plan and plot the movie (and even write the dialogue) before they start using the software, they will get a lot more out of it than if you just take the students there and let them decide what to do on the spot.

### Film Vocabulary

- **DVolver Moviemaker** has a lot of lexical items related to films and other texts to read when learners choose the options for their films:

**Movie Making:** *Location / Background / Plot / Character / Lines / Title / Credits / Director*

**Film Genres:** *Romance / Drama / Comedy / Action / Horror / Sci-Fi / Documentary*

### Other Vocabulary

There are other words used in the software that can be introduced to the learners if appropriate:

Rendezvous / Pick Up / Chase / Soliloquy – options when selecting 'plot'

Occupation / Traits / Likes / Style / Look / Locale / Mood / Skills / Hobbies – options when selecting 'character'

Location / Temperature / Population / Flora & Fauna / Humidity / Conditions / Visibility / Sunset/ Features / Population / Amenities ...and many more lexical items under each background picture.

**Dvolver** is better for language work if you are explicit with the instructions you give the students. I usually give them a worksheet with instructions similar to those below in order (aimed at practising question forms) to maximise language use and minimise faffing about that can happen when students start using this type of software.

## Making a Film with Dvolver Moviemaker

### Introduction

Today we are going to make an animated film

#### 1) Go to this website

<http://www.dvolver.com/live/moviemaker.html>

#### 2) Next, follow the instructions below:

- Start Moviemaker and select a 'Background' and 'Sky' from the list
- Press 'Next' and select 'Rendezvous' as your plot
- Press 'Next' and choose two characters
- Press 'Next' and write a Question & Answer dialogue for the characters
- When you're finished, select the music and click on 'Finish Movie'
- Write the Title of your movie and add your name then you can watch the film

You can also send the film to your teacher and friends by email!

If you think that Dvolver Moviemaker is too basic, or if you want to start another film project but using different software, then **Zimmer Twins** is another great online animated film site, which can be found here: <http://www.zimmertwins.com>.



- **Zimmer Twins** has a totally different look and feel to it. It's based on an actual TV series, and unlike Dvolver Moviemaker, it has a number of different *story starters* for students to complete. There is also spoken dialogue in the starters of the movies, and it has more options than Dvolver. Although not necessary, it's a good idea to create an account for the class so you can save movies.



- The best of the bunch of animated film sites has to be **Go Animate** (<http://goanimate.com>), which is a fabulous tool for various reasons. It has a wonderful library of characters and backgrounds and lets you upload the resulting films to Youtube or download them to your desktop. It does require creating an account (email necessary) and although it is not as easy to use as Zimmer Twins or Dvolver, it will be far more engaging for the students in the long term.

They'll want to come back to this site, which is probably not the case with the other two sites.

- Finally, **Xtranormal** <http://www.xtranormal.com/> looks like another interesting tool, and it is popular with some teachers. However, it seems to be aimed at more serious moviemakers. There are lots of cool camera effects and text to speech is incorporated, but the range of options means that learners get easily distracted and once movies are made the waiting time for them to be processed is long. For these reasons, and the fact that the text-to-speech effect is less than ideal for language learners mean that the site is not really recommended.

Using comic sites such as these will allow learners to explore language in a creative way, and you may find the use of these sites generates greater student interest in reading and writing. I hope the ideas and example sites here are as useful to you and your learners as they have been to me and mine.

### Further Information

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<http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Derrick-UsingComics.html>

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# On the relationship between language development and joint picturebook reading

**Eva Gressnich**

Although there has only been little empirical and theoretical research so far on the relationship between children's literature and language development, it is reasonable to assume that children's engagement with literature enhances processes of language acquisition from early on (Meibauer 2006: 400). For instance, at the beginning of vocabulary acquisition at twelve months, children and their parents like to look at 'early concept books' (Kümmerling-Meibauer/Meibauer 2005: 324). These books typically display a picture of a common object like a ball or an apple on each page, accompanied only by the name of the object or no text at all. The interlocutors usually engage in pointing at and labelling the objects depicted. Clearly, the purpose of these books and the specific form of attending to them is to support the child's mastery of early nominal concepts.

Concept books that address slightly older children focus on verbal concepts and actions, others deal with conceptual domains such as colours, animals or vehicles. After some time, little by little, children gain insight into the syntax of a language and, here again, picturebooks including more text and sentences of different complexity can serve as valuable input. Another acquisition process that can be affected by picturebooks is the development of irony comprehension, which requires both meta-linguistic awareness and a theory of mind (Winner 1988: 13). Kümmerling-Meibauer (1999: 176) argues that 'ironic' picturebooks, which contain a contradictory text-picture relationship (e.g. *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins or *Lily Takes a Walk* by Satoshi Kitamura), introduce children to the concept of irony. Furthermore, there is a strong connection between the emergence of children's own narratives and the narrative structures they encounter in books. Children need to learn how to structure information in their own discourse, for instance, by using connectors and other cohesive devices. This is a drawn-out process, which extends over many years. By the

time children enter school and learn how to read and write, they gain more autonomy in engaging with books and, at the same time, the length and complexity of the texts they read increases.

This short outline of a few examples shows that children's literature can affect the acquisition of language on many levels. Children's literature serves as a specific input for processes of language development, always adjusting to the cognitive and linguistic abilities of the intended readers. Additionally, there is a complex interaction between processes of language learning and processes of literature acquisition, i.e. the development of 'literary literacy', which is conceived of as the ability to comprehend and master literary conventions, narrative strategies and different kinds of genres.

To a greater or lesser extent, the interdependencies discussed so far all play a role in both first language acquisition and the learning of a second language, either because a field of acquisition has to be learned for every language or because a field non-specific to a particular language, e.g. the comprehension of the concept of irony, extends over a long time span, beginning in early childhood and still in progress long after a child has entered primary education.

In the following, I will briefly exemplify the interfaces mentioned above by discussing three picturebooks: *Sam's Teddy Bear* by Eva Eriksson and Barbro Lindgren, *Cold Paws, Warm Heart* by Madeleine Floyd, and *Voices in the Park* by Anthony Browne. While *Sam's Teddy Bear* is addressed to beginning learners, the other two books are clearly intended for advanced young learners. I aim to sketch out specific fields of language learning that can be affected by the joint reading of these books: the acquisition of syntax, the mastery of the deictical pronoun *I* and its use in first-person narratives, and the development of metaphor understanding.

*Sam's Teddy Bear* by Eriksson and Lindgren describes a short and funny scene in the life of the central character, Sam, whose teddy bear is rescued out of the potty by Sam's dog. The story extends over 13 doublespreads and contains a total of 13 sentences as well as one picture on every right page. *Cold Paws, Warm Heart* by Floyd tells the story of a polar bear, who at first feels cold inside and is alone, and eventually makes friends with Hannah, a girl from the

nearby village. The story extends over twelve doublespreads and contains about 55 sentences. The doublespreads vary in the number of pictures they display – some of them only show one picture extending over the whole spread, others contain two or more small pictures. The well-known picturebook *Voices in the Park* by Browne tells the story of a day in the park from the different perspectives of the four protagonists. The story extends over 30 pages and also contains about 55 sentences. There is one picture on every page.

### **Picturebooks can serve as input for a child reader learning the syntax of a language.**

We have seen how the three picturebooks vary in respect to text length; but, more importantly, the books also vary in respect to sentence complexity. *Sam's Teddy Bear* contains only simple sentences in present tense, a lot of them having a 'subject-verb-object' structure, such as *Sam bites Teddy Bear* or *Doggie pulls Teddy Bear out*. By contrast, the other two books include several complex sentences like the following taken from *Cold Paws, Warm Heart*. *The only thing that kept him company was a silver flute, which he played each day to forget his troubles*. Clearly, books like the one by Eriksson and Lindgren are intended for beginning learners, in that they offer them a first insight into the syntax of a language and make them familiar with basic structures. In comparison, the other two books acquaint the more advanced child reader with complex sentences. Both book types can function as an input for language development at different levels of the learning process.

It is also to be mentioned that the text in *Sam's Teddy Bear* seems to belong to the text type 'picture description'. This effect is achieved by the choice of present tense as narrative tense and the multiple deictical references to entities depicted in the pictures (e.g. *Look, there's Doggie!*). It can be argued that the text in this book is adjusted to the form of joint reading with younger children, where the visual level is in the center of attention. In contrast, the texts in the other two books seem to be much more self-contained and independent of the pictures, firstly, because there are no explicit references to the visual level, and, secondly, because of the use of past tense as narrative tense.

When we compare *Voices in the Park* to the other two books, an additional process of language acquisition has to be considered. While the books by Eriksson/Lindgren and Floyd imply a third-person narrative, Browne's book contains a first-person narrative or rather four different first-person narratives. By the age of three, most children have acquired the meaning of the deictical personal pronoun *I*, i.e. they understand that *I* refers to the speaker and that, in this case, reference depends on the context of utterance. However, when it comes to the use of the pronoun *I* in the context of a fictional first-person narrative, it requires more complex cognitive processes to determine reference correctly (Gressnich/ Meibauer 2010; Nikolajeva/ Scott 2001: 124; Nodelman 1991). For example, in a joint reading situation, it is possible that a child at first inclines to believe that the pronoun *I* refers to the person reading the story. However, incongruencies will occur, and the child will notice that the narrative utterances understood as statements of the person reading to her do not make any sense. A child has to learn that the referent of the pronoun is to be found in the context of the plot, i.e. the child needs to develop a concept of the narrator of a story. It is reasonable to assume that it takes children some time to become familiar with first-person narratives and to acquire this important aspect of literary literacy. How and when the child eventually manages to determine the correct reference for *I* is far from clear. But certainly, picturebooks like Browne's *Voices in the Park* support children in this particular acquisition process and the pictures in first-person picturebooks probably play an important role when it comes to reference assignment. This example shows, how processes of language learning (here, the acquisition of the pronoun *I*) and processes of literary literacy development (here, the emergence of the ability to master first-person narratives) interact in complex ways.

Last but not least, picturebooks like *Cold Paws, Warm Heart* introduce children to the concept of metaphor (Rau, forthcoming). The whole book by Madeleine Floyd is based on the metaphor 'friendship is warmth'. Furthermore, the metaphor is supported by the pictures, in that they reflect the bear's development from being cold outside and inside, to feeling warm and happy through the choice of colours that synaesthetically illustrate the bear's emotions. Here again, the combination of the verbal and the visual helps

children become familiar with a complex linguistic phenomenon.

The discussion of these picturebooks in relation to certain processes of language and literature acquisition shows, on the one hand, that empirical research is necessary to fully grasp the complex interfaces that have been sketched above. On the other hand, this short analysis exemplifies the potential of picturebooks when it comes to support a child's cognitive, linguistic and literacy development.

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## Reviews

### *Great Expectations*

#### *The ELT Graphic Novel*

**Charles Dickens/Jen Green, illustrated John Stokes, adapted for ELT by Brigit Viney**

Heinle Cengage Learning 2010 160pp.  
ISBN: 978-1-4240-2879-5

### *The Combined Teachers' Resource Pack*

*for Henry V, Frankenstein, Macbeth & Great Expectations*

#### *The ELT Graphic Novels*

**Carol Nutall**

Heinle Cengage Learning 2011 246pp.  
ISBN-10:1-4240-5730-2  
ISBN-13: 978-1-4240-5730-6

**Graphic novels** offer a new didactic approach to the literature classroom in second language acquisition. Beyond the fact that they tell a story, graphic novels or comics also appeal to different cognitive abilities of the reader, like the handling of images and their interpretation: graphic novels educate *visual literacy*.

There is a variety of graphic novels that can be used in the classroom, a new issue is the adaption of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. The content of the story includes the development of the protagonists and their conquering of the class-dominated society of 19<sup>th</sup> century London. It is about the rise and loss of luck of Pip and Estella. There is an unknown benefactor and a mystery about his doings. The role of the grownups involved in their upbringing is questioned – which may be compared to a contemporary conflict with the parental role. Pip's and Estella's relationship is demonstrated through their love, distance and uneasy coming together. Therefore this is an interesting topic for students who are dealing with serious love issues themselves for the first time in their lives.

The graphic novel is recommended for teaching at the intermediate to upper intermediate level

(B1-B2). From my point of view it would be great to use in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, when pupils are interested in development, adolescence and love life, these are topics and themes to interest them.

The atmosphere of the original novel is very well pictured in the graphic novel. It remains quite close to Dickens, but still develops a really attractive visualization of the characters and settings of the story. The artist works very naturalistically – much more so than in a usual comic. The faces are given realistic expressions, only perhaps a bit overdrawn. Still the lines are done in a clean-cut way, characters are easily recognized, and the symbolism is easily discovered. The colours used in the graphic novel illustrate the mood of the situations in the scenes pictured. The artist exploits the gaps between the panels and/or the layout of the whole page as one single picture to underline the message. The story is told in captions by Pip, but there are also speech-bubbles with direct speech. In this way you are able to discover by the language of a character if he or she is well educated. All in all, the graphic novel sticks quite close to the original novel and the reader becomes familiar with a literary masterpiece by Charles Dickens.

The graphic novel is great to use in the ELT classroom, and you can combine it with the recently published teachers' resource pack. It is an accumulation of different tasks you can give to your students, separated in *before, while and after reading*. They are really good content wise. The only thing missing is the discussion about the visual art and the visual literacy a graphic novel actually is encouraging. In my opinion *Great Expectations* as a graphic novel is not only a way to help students understand an original Dickens' novel, but also a piece of art made by the author/artist of the graphic novel, distributing pictures, colours and non-verbal communication. Content wise the resource pack is nearly perfect, but in order to understand the abilities, advantages and chances a graphic novel offers, students could also analyze, interpret and investigate the pictures to fully understand their impact, and practise *visual literacy*.

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## English Through Music

Anice Paterson and Jane Willis

Oxford University Press 2008 96 pp.  
ISBN978 0 19 44268 0

Most of us teaching primary and pre-school English rely heavily on songs in the classroom. This book however, is not just about singing songs.

The Oxford Basics for Children series are 'short, accessible books for teachers of young or very young children. They provide support, teaching idea, and materials for a wide range of language and skills.'

The book opens with an introduction in which it is made clear that very little teacher expertise in music is assumed. It goes on to mention that activities have been used successfully in a wide range of situations (class size, language level and age). Thus the book would seem to be for the English Language teacher who is interested in doing a bit more, musically-speaking, than 'just' singing songs. However, the introduction also mentions CLIL and how the book can be used as a core music course or integrated into an English course. But the book is not a course in music. Essentially, it is 30 musically driven activities. This book attempts to provide us with activities that will integrate aspects of music into the English classroom.

The book is divided into eight sections, which are labelled rather uninterestingly A – H.

A Warm ups

B Listening and experimenting with sounds

C Songs, rhymes and actions– minimal language

D Rhythm, games and patterns

E Listening and responding to music

F Songs, rhymes and actions – more language

G Stories with sounds and actions

H Composing musical pictures

So there is a variety of topics. Readers familiar with OUP layout will recognise the clarity with each activity is set out with the language focus and the music focus at the top of the page. The age group is also indicated. However, you should use your discretion. For example the activity B2 *Burglar* would not be suitable for any children

over pre-school age in my context and yet it says it is for 4 – 12 year olds.

In section D there are activities for developing rhythm and one that caught my attention was *Eat up* (D3). Here the children learn to recognise rhythms and make a rhythmic composition. *Spider Ant* (D6) is also another activity that I can see working well. Here there is a grid with animals on and the class agrees on a sound for each animal and then plays their music. The authors suggest instruments (bells, triangle), which you may or may not have access to. They also mention a bunch of keys. I'm not sure that I would want my class to play with my keys. But the point is that you can make music with what is around you. That is true and very appealing. In fact most of the activities have been devised with the busy teacher in mind. These activities do not need photocopies, nor expensive instruments or equipment. For the most part, you just need yourself and your class!

However, the part where I feel that this book could have been so much better is the CD. A music book must surely be accompanied by a useful CD. It would have been much better if the tunes had been accompanied – they are all sung just with voice – either children's or an adult's. The tracks seem to have been solely for the teacher to use when preparing her lessons. This is valid but not for this book. Even the best solo singers in the world have accompaniment! Surely listening to musical tunes and different instruments is part of any child's musical education?

This book doesn't jump off the shelf at you. The cover is a plain green, there are very few pictures and as I mentioned earlier the sections are lettered. But if you or your staff are inexperienced, or if you are involved in teacher training then this book will be useful. You will realise that English classes don't always have to have language as the main focus, and these activities will provide a pleasant alternative to your course book.

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## *Formulaic Language: Pushing the Boundaries*

**Alison Wray**

Oxford University Press 2008 305 pp.  
ISBN: 978-0-19-442245-1

### ***Formulaic Language: Pushing the Boundaries***

is Wray's second book-length publication on formulaic language. The book's main aim is to test the Needs Only Analysis model proposed by the author "to examine the extent of its explanatory power by testing the boundaries of its scope" (p. 4).

*Formulaic Language* describes the phenomenon that although we are capable of understanding and producing novel utterances, we tend to express ideas and concepts in the prefabricated chunks of language stored in our memory (p. 94). Wray proposes that the mental lexicon is heteromorphic, that is, "that linguistic material is stored in bundles of different sizes" (p. 12). She introduces a new term to define this: the Morpheme Equivalent Unit (MEU). This is a word, or a string of words, "processed like a morpheme, that is, without recourse to any form-meaning matching of any sub-parts it may have" (p. 12).

The book consists of four parts, the first of which outlines the theoretical framework of the book and includes a summary of the key points discussed in previous publications on the topic. In the second part, the boundaries alluded to in the title and a variety of linguistic theories are discussed in great depth. Part three is divided into six chapters, each summarizing and discussing empirical studies which were undertaken to evaluate the claims made in her earlier publication, *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon*. The last part synthesizes the previous three parts, includes evidence from many other sources, and also makes suggestions for further research.

This book succeeds in providing a comprehensive overview of the nature of formulaic language and also addresses extralinguistic formulaicity. The author uses a number of well-designed figures to illustrate and summarize her arguments. The empirical studies outlined in part three are highly readable and enlightening and deal with a number of issues

ranging from machine-translation to the formulaic language learning of beginners and advanced foreign language learners.

The theoretical background of formulaic language is largely based on Wray's earlier publication so it might be advisable for readers new to the topic to start there first. For experienced readers, however, this book offers interesting new insights. It can also be used as the basis for an advanced linguistics class at university level, since the empirical research in particular is ideal for further discussion or as a springboard for similar studies.

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### **Dear readers and publishers,**

Reviews are an important component of C&TS. The editors try to select books for review that could be of use to practising primary and secondary teachers, to teacher trainers and educators and their students, and to materials developers – reflecting the diversity of the YLT SIG membership. Therefore you will find on these pages resource books, latest scholarship and – matching the theme of this issue – a graphic novel with teachers' resource pack.

If you are a publisher and wish to submit books for review, please write to the editors (Janice or ffinlo). Please be aware that the books must reach the editor well before the deadline for copy, as it may take some time to find a suitable reviewer. The deadlines for copy are

Spring issue: 01.February

Autumn issue: 01.August

**Please note: IATEFL policy dictates that we do not review course books.**

## *Research for Materials Development in Language Learning*

*Evidence for best practice*

**Brian Tomlinson & Hitomi Masuhara (eds)**

Continuum International Publishing Group 2010  
432 pp.  
Paperback ISBN 978-1-4411-2293-3

Beginning with the greatest strength of ***Research for Materials Development in Language Learning***: the book is far-reaching and forward thinking. It is unusual and very refreshing to find an edited volume with this breadth: 26 contributions from researchers from very differing contexts around the world.

The editors Tomlinson and Masuhara introduce their intention: “to expand the scope, range, volume and depth of empirical research in materials development.” (p. 10) They justify the need for this international collection of papers: “English as a lingua franca... is rapidly becoming a basic requirement just like literacy or numeracy...” (p.11). Tomlinson and Masuhara draw attention to the important role of materials development in language teaching pedagogy, outline the research to date, and contribute substantially to this neglected area with their new volume.

The research papers are collated under five headings:

1. Research on the Effects of Extensive Reading
2. Research on the Effects of In-House Materials for University Students
3. Research on the Effects of Locally Developed Materials for Language Learners
4. Research on the Effectiveness of Materials
5. Applications of the Research Results

Amongst valuable papers in part one, Ghosn’s is entitled *Five-year Outcomes from Children’s Literature-based Programmes vs. Programmes Using a Skills-based ESL Course – The Mathew and Peter Effects at Work?* Ghosn reaches an important conclusion and supports it by research evidence: “When children acquire extensive vocabulary and schemata from their readings, their reading skills improve, and, the better they read the more motivated they will be to read more, thus gaining more vocabulary and

background knowledge, which will further improve their reading skills.” (p. 29)

Part two has an emphasis on the currently very important field of Intercultural Learning. Troncoso’s paper: *The Effects of Language Materials on the Development of Intercultural Competence* is timely and convincing. His findings: “From my perspective, there seems to be a gap between what theorists claim and what language policy-makers and some material developers do.” (p.87) and “...we are still using in our language classrooms materials which promote hegemony and the standardisation of languages and cultures” (91) will resonate with many language teachers and teacher educators whose curriculum includes intercultural communicative competence.

Inevitably, with a book of this scope, the reader will pick and choose the most useful contributions for his or her setting. With 26 papers to choose from, some papers will be more relevant than others. I would have liked a more detailed theoretical background to the concept of process drama in Park’s *Process Drama in the Korean EFL Secondary Classroom: A Case Study of Korean Middle School Classrooms* in part three. I found the discussion of Dorothy Heathcote’s seminal ideas somewhat cursory.

That said, Tomlinson and Masuhara have made a very significant contribution to scholarship in this area. Useful findings on the applications of the research results such as “Helping learners to think critically and creatively are important objectives in most Ministry of Education curricula and yet they are objectives which are given little attention in textbooks” (p.405) are gathered together in part five, which is written by the editors.

This book should be made available to all student teachers preparing to teach English, both in adult and mainstream primary and secondary contexts. Hopefully the book will also be very welcome to materials developers and publishers. However, perhaps next time a more memorable title might be chosen, as particularly Tomlinson is prolific in this area, and distinctive titles would greatly help the reader to identify and distinguish his different publications.

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## *Culture in our Classrooms*

*Teaching language through cultural content*

**Gill Johnson and Mario Rinvoluceri**

Delta Teacher Development Series 2010 104 pp.  
Paperback ISBN 978-1-905085-21-7

The impact of Cultural Studies on English Language Teaching is highly visible in modern curricula and recent didactic publications on teaching culture in the EFL Classroom. Considering the intricacies and multi-layeredness of cultural issues it seems extremely challenging to provide “over 80 practical and easy-to-use communicative activities” – as the authors claim – that help students to see beyond stereotypes and empathise with other cultures. Gill Johnson and Mario Rinvoluceri have mastered this task most successfully and put forward a book that convincingly combines methods and activities for classroom application still firmly based on theoretical perspectives brought about by the cultural turn in humanities.

The authors explore the notion of culture from different angles and combine a reflection on culture, language and language teaching with a multitude of aspects of culture turned into classroom activities, thus fostering communication as well as critical thinking. The structure mirrors this approach. Part A offers definitions of culture and discusses issues such as “culture and society”, “culture and values”, “culture within culture” etc. preparing the reader for part B, the backbone of this book, which on some 70 pages provides activities grouped in four sub-chapters (“Activating cultural awareness”, “Words, metaphors and stories”, “Frames for studying culture”, “Spotlight on the UK”). All activities follow the structure of preparation, procedure and postscript and offer easy-to-follow steps into both activating and reflection-inciting methods. Part C puts forward 16 practical exercises for staffroom sessions, taking a wider professional perspective into consideration and appealing to the teacher’s mind-set. Relating back to part A and mediating between theory and practice, this latter part of the book focuses on observation, listening, rapport building and empathy.

The structure of “Culture in our Classrooms” is highly suitable for integrating theoretical perspectives and practical application in the format of a hands-on publication that offers more than just easy-to-swallow recipes. As Barry Tomalin in his foreword rightly stresses, Johnson and Rinvoluceri put an emphasis on the attitude to the teaching of culture and bring out the principle of interculturality very strongly. It seems fair enough to close this review with the authors’ words: “In going through the text and experimenting with the activities, you will correct our biases – in your own biased way!”

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### **Teacher Professional Development Conference**

**YLT SIG supported event**

**Date:** June 10 - 11, 2011

**Venue:** Bratislava, Slovakia

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For more information please contact Alena Štefániková at [alena.stefanikova@britishcouncil.sk](mailto:alena.stefanikova@britishcouncil.sk)

# Graphic Novels in the literature EFL classroom:

## *Coraline*

**Janice Bland**

**What's in a name? That which we call a rose □  
By any other name would smell as sweet.  
(*Romeo and Juliet*)**

What's in a name?

Two neologisms, *picturebooks* and *graphic novels*, have recently been created in an attempt to encourage the world of education – e.g. teachers and teacher educators – to take (“childish”) picture books and (“trivial”) comics seriously. Many believe they know all these multimodal ensembles have to offer and neglect to even consider their potential for the secondary L2 literature classroom.

In an increasingly visual culture, literacy educators can profit from the use of graphic novels in the classroom, especially for young adults. The term graphic novel includes fiction as well as nonfiction text with pictures – “comics” in book format. (Schwarz 2002)

Graphic novels are novel-length stories, usually bound like a book, told in word and images. Whereas comics are frequently ongoing series, graphic novels usually tell a stand-alone story. The potential of graphic novels for ELT might be summarised as follows:

- I. **Struggling and reluctant readers need graphics to motivate them to go on with the story. They read the meanings carried in the images, which support the verbal text.**
- II. **Graphic novels can provide the teen reader who needs diversion “not a mindless but a mindful form of escapism that uses a unique kind of language – ‘graphic language’ – to invite us into different worlds in order to help us better understand our own.” (Versaci 2007)**
- III. **There are, of course, teen readers who wish to be challenged by texts; this works well where the images, the sequencing, the layout and the verbal text interact in ways that are charged with meaning beyond the meanings available to L2 readers in verbal**

text alone. This promotes stimulating discussion.

- IV. **High-level teen readers can be offered the opportunity to compare texts critically, as many graphic novels are reworkings of children's/young adult classics, or exist also as film.**

Graphic novels can form a bridge between the first literary texts in the primary language class, picturebooks, and the important narrative medium of film.

Comic readers have to learn to read comic books and need to develop certain ‘comics literacy’. To read comics or a graphic novel the critical skills needed for all reading comprehension are needed. ... This literacy includes understanding the unique language of comics... (Tiemensma 2009: 3)

### **What IS the unique language of graphic novels/ comics?**

**Speech and thought balloons** – The extensive use of direct speech in graphic novels deepens the reader's involvement with characters in the story, e.g. through an idiosyncratic way of speaking. The characters in graphic novels generally speak in ‘people prose’, employing the rhythm and register of conversational language, which is sufficiently easy and supportive for L2 acquisition.

**Panel** – each image is in a panel, usually closed by a border. The sequences of panels underline the sequential nature of the narrative.

**Layout** – the size and shape of panels on page and their juxtaposition all carry meaning, may be emotionally charged, or e.g. speed up or slow down the narrative.

**Transition** – how one panel changes to the next, i.e. how the action is fractured. As in picturebooks, this is carefully orchestrated to contribute meaning.

**Gutter** – space between panels. It is in these gaps that reader participation is required: “a silent dance of the seen and the unseen” (McCloud 1993: 92).

... the ‘empty space’ between the panels, the so-called ‘gutter’, is an integral part of the comic. In the classroom, this may offer itself for various tasks like telling what may have happened between temporally distant panels or adding one's own panels with additional dialogue in order to fill gaps. (Vanderbeke 2006: 366)

**Caption** – the area of text, often rectangular, that is narrated, not spoken by a character in the scene.

**Motion lines** have become conventionalised to show movement and **sound words** add a “soundtrack” – see example from *The Beano Book* (1989). “The idea that a picture can evoke an emotional or sensual response in the viewer is vital to the art of comics.” (McCloud 1993: 121)



**Encapsulation** – the trapping of a certain moment in a panel.

**Salience** – how a single element is highlighted.

**Flashback/ bird’s eye and worm’s eye view/ close-up and extreme close-up** – devices borrowed from film, to achieve cinematic effects.

**Cartoon style** – the cartoony artistic style is common in graphic novels. Scott McCloud identifies “amplification through simplification”: the cartoon style is more abstract and universal, and potentially more focused and intense than realistic styles (McCloud 1993: 30).

See the screen shot from *The Wizard Of Oz* for an example of **amplification through simplification** in film.

**Silhouette** – another kind of simplification that is used sparingly for extreme focus and intensity.



Literary art forms that involve pictures and sequential art like comics address younger and older readers from the very start of their learning and still reach teenagers and young adults on an advanced level. (Burwitz-Melzer: forthcoming)

Graphic novels “speak to adolescent readers in a way that word-based literature sometimes fails to” Philip Pullman (Pullman 2001: 300). They can be challenging, enlightening and very motivating for young EFL readers. Graphic novels offer students the incentive to take an active and therefore empowering role in their literary education. Characteristics that require readers to co-create the stories are multimodal narrative, typographic experimentation, unusual layout and montage.

Sequential art provides plenty of opportunity for connecting the story to children’s own experiences, predicting what will happen and inferring what happens between panels, just as they would do with a text story. (Tiemensma 2009: 6)

## Coraline

Neil Gaiman’s graphic novel *Coraline* (2008) illustrated by Craig Russell, is adapted from Gaiman’s prize-winning young adult novel *Coraline* (2002). Already we have rich opportunities for comparison: we can compare a scene from the text as novel with a scene from the graphic novel and the same scene in the film (directed by Henry Selick, 2009). It should be noted, however, that whereas the graphic novel is a very close reworking of the novel, the film differs considerably. It is very helpful for the student to explore ideas for film analysis and the

understanding of movie techniques initially with the still pictures of graphic novels:

But while movies offer a stream of images and thus require a reconstruction of particular scenes in the discussion, the panels of comics can be analysed more easily as they are fixed on the page and it is always possible to return to earlier pictures if this should be necessary. (Vanderbeke 2006: 368)

The very first page of *Coraline* is an example of amplification through simplification. The graphic novel artist Craig Russell's simplified outline of the house in flat pastel colours suggest this grand old house symbolises something beyond itself, as if it were alive. The new home of the heroine Coraline, an apartment in this grand house, will play a major role in the story. The watchful black cat, poised ready to run away, suggests danger and magic. Teen readers will recognise certain conventions, such as the connection between a black cat and witches, the spooky atmosphere of an old house on a hill, and the secretive and blind appearance of the windows – helping them to predict significant elements of the story. Readers, at approximately the age of Coraline, around 14 years old, have a great deal of experience in reading pictures, but may need to work in groups around pictures to negotiate meaning, without losing face, and support from the teacher where necessary to put their message into words.



Coraline is a solitary and bored protagonist, with extremely busy parents, so she explores her new environment and visits her eccentric neighbours alone. Then one day she discovers that her new home is creepily mirrored on the other side of a blocked-up door. Coraline braves the secret passageway to this 'mirror world' – reminding us of Alice's adventures down the rabbit hole and through the looking glass. In the mirror world she discovers she has an 'other mother' and 'other father'. Despite her spooky button eyes, the Other Mother first attracts Coraline with her mothering and enthusiastic 'love'. Coraline enjoys her traditional cooking and her flattering attention, but gradually the other mother becomes more sinister – she wants to sew buttons into Coraline's eyes. What can the symbolism of button eyes mean? Clearly this is horrific, as eyes suggest our inner depth and represent individuality, like a window to the soul.

Thus the other mother wants to replace Coraline's eyes with uniform, black buttons not simply to deprive Coraline of her individuality (her awry look), but because "looking awry" poses a threat to this other mother. (Rudd 2008: 164)

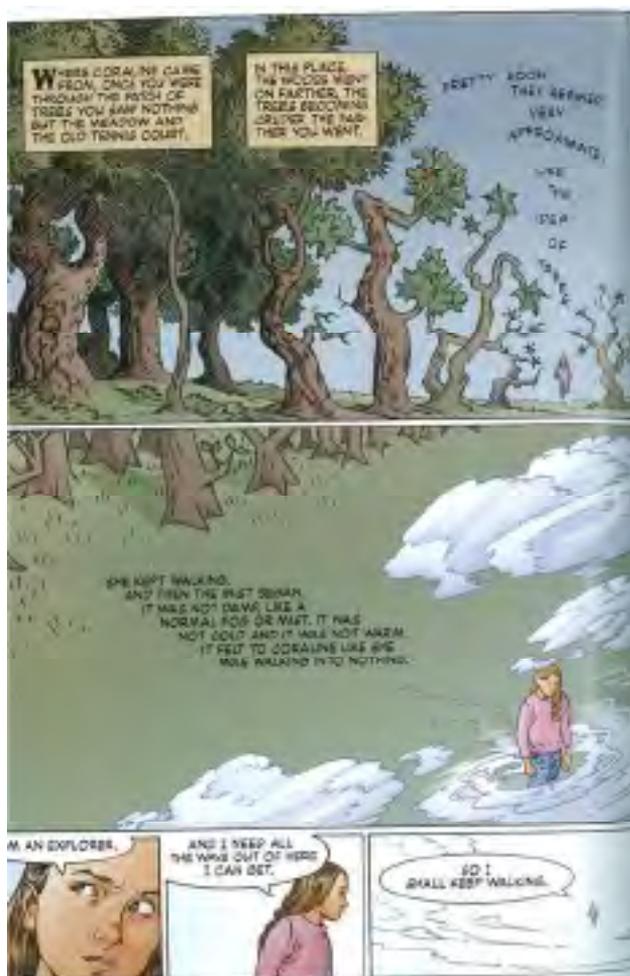
In postmodern fiction there are rarely clear answers, *Coraline* is a puzzle with any number of solutions. This is empowering, for if there is no one 'correct' interpretation, the students may be encouraged to find their own meanings (as long as they can justify them through a close reading of the text) rather than relying on 'experts' to supply the meaning.

Gradually Coraline, with the help of the witchy cat, finds out that the mirror world is a creation of the Other Mother's, to entrap her, as in a spider's web. She realises the Other Mother wants in some way to consume her. When walking through the garden of the 'other world', she discovers that the further she walks the less real it becomes: "the trees becoming cruder the further you went. Pretty soon they seemed very approximate, like the idea of trees." (Gaiman/Russell: 82) The original novel text is only slightly longer:

...the trees becoming cruder and less treelike the further you went. Pretty soon they seemed very approximate, like the idea of trees: a greyish-brown trunk below, a greenish splodge of something that might have been leaves above. (Gaiman 2002: 86)

Creating this scene in pictures, Craig Russell uses the layout to slow down the narrative, by spreading two large panels right across the page.

He draws attention to his extremely cartoon-like style in representing the unreal other world, which becomes sketchier and sketchier. Coraline appears to walk out of each panel, almost to drop out of the world. Russell has with his art and salience on the cruder and cruder trees (and typographic experimentation in the first panel) recreated the ‘invented’ nature of the other world, thus he draws attention to the means of creating a graphic novel – his art. This is known as metafiction or self-reflexivity, and is a common device in postmodern fiction, picturebooks and graphic novels. Self-reflexivity helps young readers to consider how texts are constructed. This is a lesson in literary literacy and, because it can be graphically demonstrated in the graphic novel, may be discussed already with teen readers.



The book *Coraline* brings the terror right inside the normally safe environment of the home, making it even more disturbing. This has been identified as an example of the ‘uncanny’ – when the familiar is invaded by strangeness (Reynolds 2010, Rudd 2008). In German the contrast is

even clearer, from the safe and homely – *heimatlich* – to the eerie and uncanny – *unheimlich*. Russell portrays the Other Mother as very unfeminine, flat chested and bony, quite the opposite of warm, cuddly and homely. She reminds us of the long line of fearful stepmothers in fairy tales and even modern tales, such as *Harry Potter*. Kimberley Reynolds maintains the “cultural and aesthetic wild zone at the centre of children’s literature is a space for dissenters of all kinds.” (Reynolds 2010: 15). It is certainly interesting how the themes in children’s literature, for example unreliable authority figures, are continuously reinvented each time from a different perspective. Adolescence is, of course, the time when children’s eyes are opened to the lack of perfection in their parents, teachers and other adult authority figures – something that the Other Mother would prevent, by replacing the eyes with buttons. *Coraline* may appear subversive in that the home and (real) parents, even a well-meaning policeman, are all portrayed as somewhat flawed – though certainly not evil like the Other Mother. This is in contrast to much classic children’s literature, where the real mother and/or father, often no longer alive, are portrayed as perfect. Postmodern children’s fiction is for this reason empowering for students, as a more realist portrayal of authority figures is usually offered.



Finally Coraline has to find the inner strength to save herself as well as her parents and other child victims from the Other Mother. And Coraline is able to find that strength, and a new pleasure in existence, so that ultimately *Coraline* ends optimistically and suggests faith in young people.

The light that came through the window was real golden late-afternoon daylight, not a white mist. The robin's-egg blue sky had never seemed so **sky**, the world had never seemed so **world**. (Gaiman/Russell: 154, emphasis in the original)

The educationist David Perkins (1994) describes how taking time over looking at art is particularly supportive for building thinking dispositions. He refers to

**Sensory anchoring**... (a picture) can be physically present as you think and talk, providing an anchor over a prolonged period of exploration.

**Instant access**... You can check something with a glance, point with a finger.

**Personal engagement**. Works of art invite and welcome sustained involvement. (Perkins 1994: 83-85, emphasis in the original)

According to Perkins, it is necessary to take time over looking at art.

"Thinking through looking" thus has a double meaning: the looking we do should be thought through, and thoughtful looking is a way to make thinking better. (Perkins 1994: 3)

*Coraline* is meant for young teen readers, but this does not mean that the artwork is simple, any more than suggesting a simple story. Both are complex and require thoughtful discussion in a community of readers. The colourful pages of *Coraline* are aesthetically attractive in their emphasis on shapes. The composition of the following page reveals many patterns. Although the image of the animated hand of the evil Other Mother is horrific, the forms (parallel lines of the stairs, triangular lilac splash of light against the violet wall and the slanting entrance to the grand old house, which frames Coraline against a turquoise shadow) encourage the kind of personal engagement referred to by Perkins. The hand itself, gigantic in the foreground, dances in mid-air providing an excellent example of salience, in this case through lack of colour and through the spiky shape.



It is the house itself that finally defeats what is left of the Other Mother, carefully orchestrated by Coraline. She lures the Other Mother's hand to an exceedingly deep well in the garden, and using an innocent-seeming dolls' picnic as a disguise, gets the hand to fall down to the bottom of the well, which Coraline then immediately and securely covers up. (Typically the film of *Coraline* weakens the role of the heroine, by introducing a boy character who "comes to the rescue" at this climax.)

Thus the adolescent state of in-between is celebrated to the end, Coraline succeeds by using her teenage courage and cleverness, and, where necessary, the weapons of the child.

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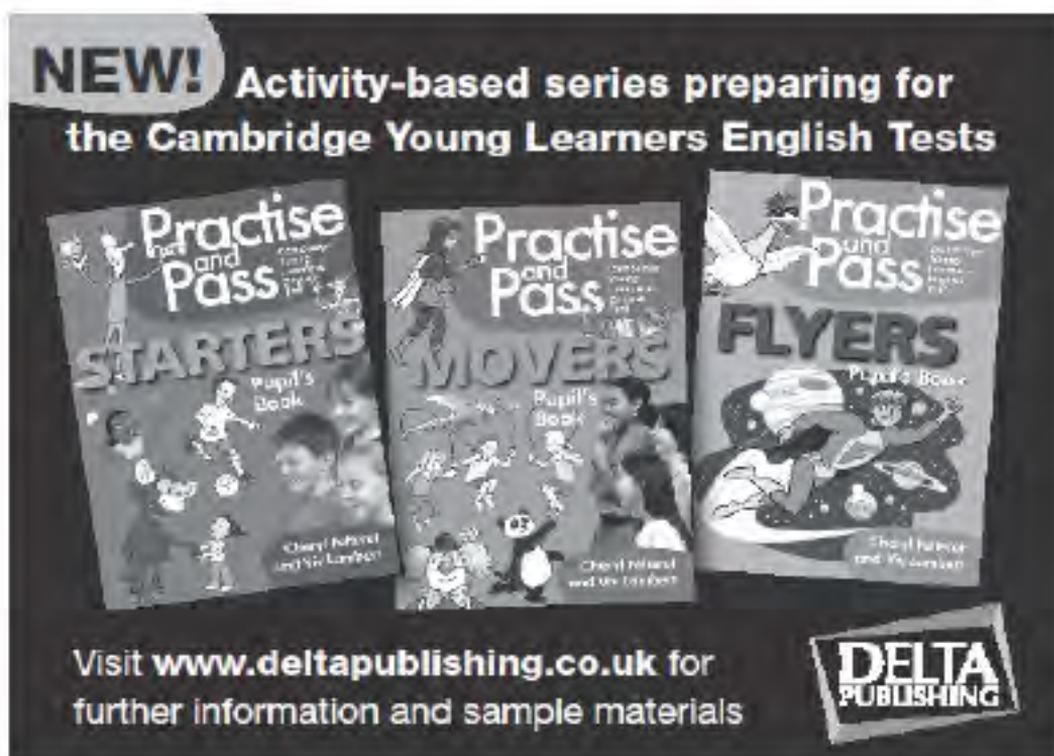
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24-25 June 2011	IATEFL BESIG Preston, UK
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# Exploring Diversity through Literature

**Jamie Gibbings**

**At primary level story and picturebooks can be powerful tools for raising awareness, framing issues and launching discussions. Stories**



**are a natural, motivating way to learn and have an intrinsic, universal appeal. As well as introducing a wider cultural context, they can allow students to learn about themselves, and build resiliency, empathy, or moral reasoning.**

As classroom practitioners we should consider the various levels at which young learners engage with a story or picturebook; as well as building their 'bottom-up' understanding of letters, words and sounds they may also be making inferences from content made up of text and pictures. Their 'top-down' understanding of a story, based on their existing knowledge, may help them understand the theme or implied lesson, or it may be that the story itself introduces an important new value. The subject of diversity can involve concepts quite complex for a young learner, and yet there are a number of engaging story and picturebooks that explore related topics in uncomplicated language. The small sample outlined below includes suggestions for pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading tasks.

## **Disability Awareness:**

In the story *Susan Laughs* by Jeanne Willis the reader is introduced to a young, vivacious girl, then learns about her various abilities and likes through engaging pictures and simple text. Using the story's rhyme scheme, even very young learners can try to guess the next line, building prediction skills. The story concludes with a picture of Susan in her wheelchair, which can be used to broach the subject of disabilities for a class discussion. When using the text for reading comprehension work, as well as the usual content questions teachers could include items to develop higher-order thinking skills such as, 'Were you surprised when you found out that Susan has a wheelchair? Why? Why not? Would you like to have Susan as a friend? Why? Why not?'

## **Race:**

In *Black, White, Just Right* by Marguerite W. Davol a young girl narrates a simple description of her mixed race family, noting that she shares characteristics with both of her parents, but is happy to have her own unique appearance and personality. Before reading the teacher can elicit any content predictions from students based on the title and cover picture. Throughout the text a rhyme scheme is again used to encourage prediction as well as a repetitive chorus of 'just right' for younger listeners to participate in. Post-reading students could be asked to paraphrase the narrative, either in spoken or written form. They could also personalise the theme by reflecting on what they feel they have inherited from their own parents.

## **Gender roles:**

In *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch, a clever twist on traditional fairytale roles, the eponymous heroine rejects her undeserving and selfish suitor in favour of her own independence.

*Bill's New Frock* by Anne Fine is suitable for young learners who are already independent readers. In this story an archetypal male primary school student learns about the attitudes of those around him towards the genders when he finds himself mysteriously transformed into a girl for the day.

As an introduction to the theme of gender roles, the teacher can provide a list of adjectives (e.g. messy, brave, gentle, quiet) and ask students to decide whether they think they relate to girls, boys or both. The teacher can then ask the students to explain their answers as a way of launching a pre-reading discussion.

As a post-reading follow-up, students could be asked to write a parallel text, for example a narrative with the title of *The Paper Bag Prince* or *Claire's New Trousers*, reversing the roles to explore how a protagonist of the opposite gender might react to the situation.

## **Further reading:**

Kitterman, J.F. 2002 Children's books & special needs students. *The Reading Teacher*, 56(3), 236–240.  
 Zambo, D. 2005 *Using the picture book Thank You, Mr. Falker to understand struggling readers*. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 48(6), 502–512.  
 Albright, L.K., & Ariail, M. 2005 *Tapping the potential of teacher read-alouds in middle schools*. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 48(7), 582–591.

*Jamie Gibbings, British Council Singapore*

# You Can Never Be Too Old For Picturebooks:

## Children's Thoughts About Reading Picturebooks

**Janet Evans**

**Picture books are for everybody at any age, not books to be left behind, as we grow older. The best ones leave a tantalising gap between the pictures and the words, a gap that is filled by the reader's imagination, adding so much to the excitement of reading a book.**

**Anthony Browne, Children's Laureate June 2009**

Picturebooks, now widely written as one word to convey the unity of pictures and text, are an often underrated genre of children's literature – many adults openly admit that they think they are for babies and that as soon as children can read they should be reading books without pictures. Many picturebooks however are pure art forms and are complex, provocative, controversial texts sometimes dealing with previously censored and "untouched" subjects in overt and forthright ways.

In an attempt to find out what children's thoughts were about reading and responding to picturebooks, I talked with some 11-year-old (L1) children at the end of their last year in primary school. They came from a class of 23 boys and 7 girls, which made for interesting class dynamics and class discussions. Picturebooks had been read to these children on a regular basis throughout their seven years in primary school and they were used to verbalising and visualising their thoughts in relation to quite unusual polysemic, postmodern picturebooks – some of which seemed to contain quite abstruse messages.

### **Talk is Crucial**

In *Talking Beyond the Page* (Evans, 2009) it was evident that it isn't enough to just read books, we need to talk about them as well. Talk is crucial and the children who had listened to and talked about stories over a period of years were able to

think and talk about the often hidden polysemic complexities of picturebooks. These children were part of a community of readers who knew their responses would be totally accepted and considered without ridicule or disrespect. In fact they knew their ideas would often be the starting point for more discussion, frequently moving off at a tangent from the original focus of conversation onto a variety of different responses which regularly included drawings, writing, bookmaking, drama and more discussion.

11-year-old Hannah stated:

When we start to talk about a book in a group I love it because we start with one thing and then end on something totally different. We turn the pages and really start to think about different things. I really like that and I always ask myself, "How did we get on to this from that?"

I asked the children about their views and perceptions of picturebooks as a genre. We initially discussed: "What are picturebooks?"

Nicole: They are books where pictures and words go together to tell the story.

Stephan: Picturebooks allow you to go into another world; the illustrations are there for you to look at but often when I read I float into another visual place.

Matthew: Picturebooks can create a more vivid imagination because you can see the picture and relate to the author. People say, "Seeing isn't believing", but it is!

Imran: The pictures in picturebooks help you to break up the writing so they are good for people with a short concentration.

These children were more than willing to read and respond to picturebooks – however teacher knowledge and willingness to share books for pleasure is vitally important as two ongoing pieces of research is showing.

### **Promoting Reading for Pleasure: Teachers as Readers and The Power of Reading**

Two pieces of research looking at whether children read enough for pleasure along with whether teachers are as knowledgeable as they might be about children's literature have produced short summaries. *The Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers 2007 – 2008 Executive Summary* (UKLA, 2008) and *The Power of Reading: Enjoyment and Creativity for Children and Teachers: Raising Achievement in Literacy Project Research Summary 2005 –*

2009 (CLPE, 2009) both found, among other things, that children's ability to read and enjoy books of all kinds for pleasure is dependant on teachers' knowledge of children's literature and their perceived awareness of how important (or otherwise) reading as a worthwhile activity was as part of the daily curriculum. Michael Lockwood's research looking at reading for pleasure in the primary school produced similar findings (see NATE Classroom No 1 2007).

### The children's views about picturebooks

After the initial discussion, the children were asked to think about a series of questions. Their multimodal responses comprised of oral conversations, visual images, sketched and painted, written views and recounts, audio visual presentations and video recordings.

### Where do you read, who with, and how?

The children talked about, then drew pictures of, where they read, who with, and how? Their individual personalities showed in their work, often along with their preferred genre of books.



Sam: I have drawn myself reading in the garden with a character from the book. I am reading a book called *Nightmare Academy*.



Adam: I've drawn myself in Jamaica, reading whilst playing football.



Cam: I've drawn myself on my bed, which is where I like to read. I am reading a book called *Cameron's Adventure*. Lots of characters are present in my room; some of the characters out of my book have appeared out of posters.

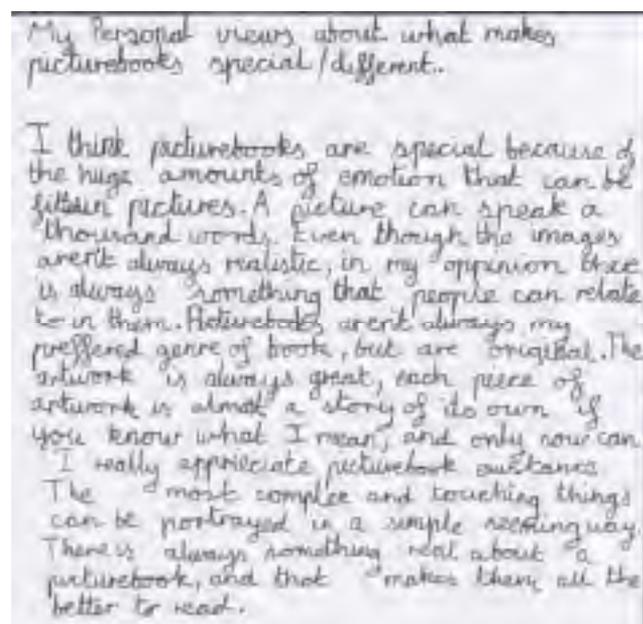
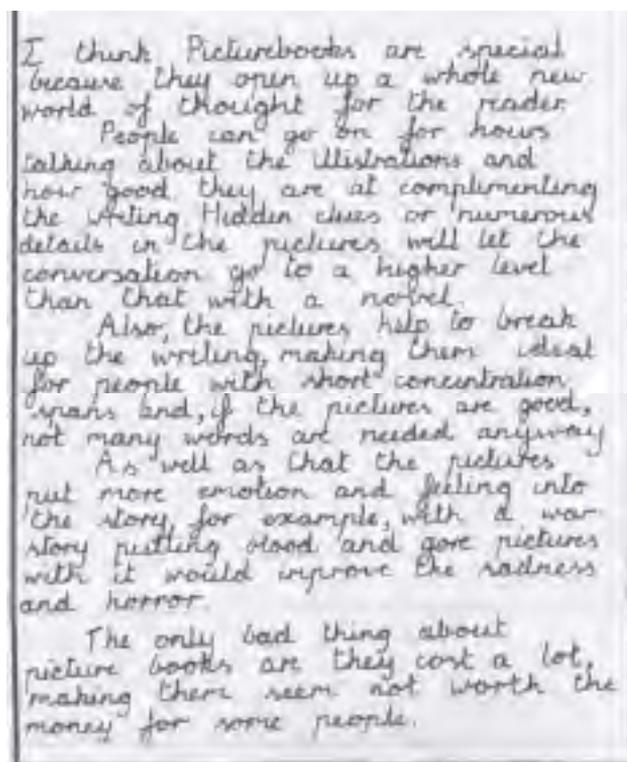


Mathew: I have drawn myself reading in no particular place, but immersed in thought from the millions of tales and stories I've read in years gone by. It doesn't matter where I read, it could be absolutely anywhere in the world because I love reading.

### What are your personal views about what makes picturebooks special /different?

A lot of discussion went on here – many of these 11 year-old (L1) children liked reading novels, this wasn't surprising as they could read fluently and were used to making choices about the books they read. However they also very much enjoyed reading and responding to picturebooks because of the content and the ensuing discussions.

Matthew: I think picturebooks are special because of the huge amounts of emotion that can be fitted in pictures. A picture can speak a thousand words. Even though the images aren't always realistic, in my opinion there is always something that people can relate to in them. Picturebooks aren't always my preferred genre of book, but they are original. The artwork is always great, each piece of artwork is almost a story of its own if you know what I mean and only now can I really appreciate picturebook existence. The most complex and touching things can be portrayed in a simple seeming way. There is always something real about a picturebook and that makes them all the better to read.

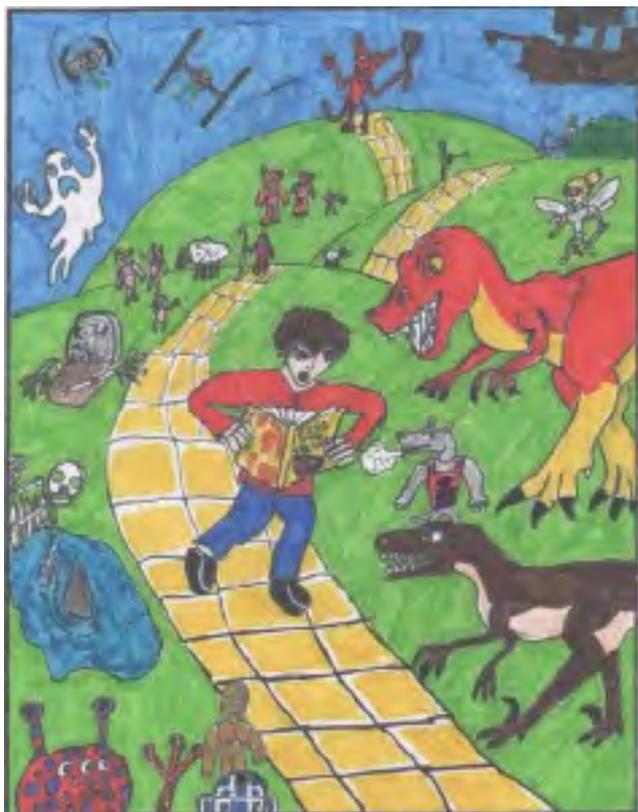


Imran: I think picturebooks are special because they open up a whole new world of thought for the reader. People can go on for hours talking about the illustrations and how good they are at complimenting the writing. Hidden clues or numerous details in the pictures will let the conversation go to a higher level than that with a novel. Also, the pictures help to break up the writing, making them ideal for people with short concentration spans and, if the pictures are good, not many words are needed anyway. As well as that the pictures put more emotion and feeling into the story, for example, with a war story putting blood and gore pictures with it would improve the sadness and horror.

The only bad thing about picturebooks is that they cost a lot, making them seem not worth the money for some people.

**When you look at and read picturebooks what happens in your head and how do you feel inside?**

The children considered this question and made some fascinating comments about what they were thinking whilst they read. They were also asked how they might depict the idea of, "talking beyond the page". Some very detailed illustrations plus related text resulted:



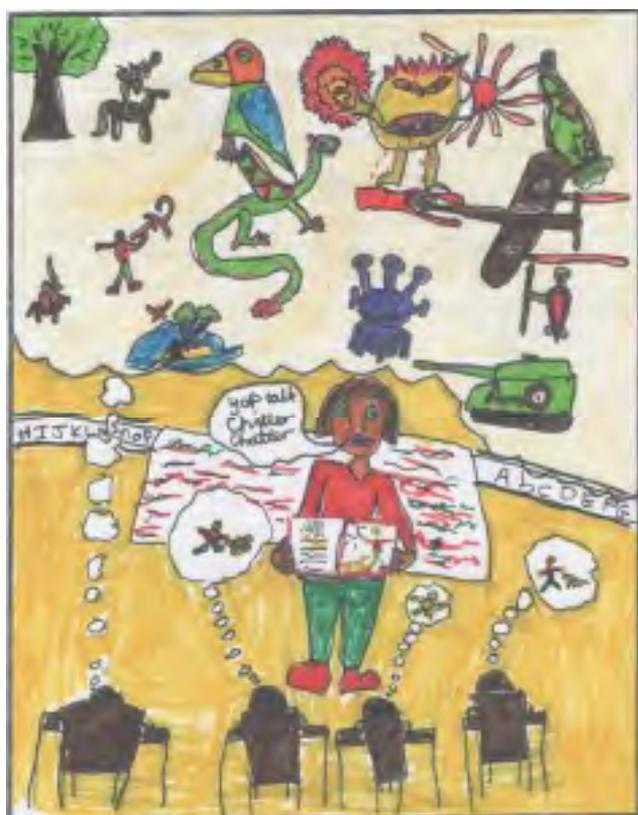
Matthew: In my picture, I'm walking down the yellow brick road searching for treasure. I'm holding a map in my hand, but it is really a book. The book guides the way, as I read every word, the way to go becomes clearer. Characters from many genres of story are following me in the search, such as dinosaurs, ghosts, aliens, characters from traditional tales, characters from Star Wars like C3PO and R2D2. All these characters live in one huge imaginary world. I cannot really see them, as the images are just my imagination forming as I read the picture book.



Nicole: I have drawn myself reading outside in my garden, drifting off into my own world with all the characters from different genres like mysteries and horror and for example, the yellow brick road from a traditional tale, The Wizard of Oz. When I read I think at the same time, I think about what is happening and I add characters to my own little world.



Stefan: I'm reading a book in my favourite place (in the jungle) and my picture is about different books coming together in one imaginary world. They are all doing the stuff they normally do in their storybooks, for example, the three little pigs, Robin Hood, Goldilocks and the three bears and Little Red Riding Hood, but in my mind they are all linked together in one place in one book.



Cameron: In my picture a teacher is reading a book to her class (some children are hidden at the side of the picture). All are thinking different things but one child, actually me, is thinking of different genres of picturebooks for example: sci-fi; fantasy; adventure; historical; horror/spooky; traditional. I am thinking of questions directly related to the book such as, "Who is the person in the book?"

### Who are picturebooks for?

Having talked with the children I began to wonder, at a personal level, who picturebooks are for and why are they written?

Some picturebooks are so complex, so convoluted, and so seemingly difficult to understand, sometimes with subject matter that is deemed by some to be unsuitable for children, that I have often found myself asking who such picturebooks are written for? Would young children make sense of them? Would older, fluent readers dismiss them immediately without taking a second look simply because they have

pictures?

We need to ask these kinds of questions about picturebooks that challenge the child reader (by dealing with often censored subject matter such as sex, death, adoption, suicide, disability etc.). Two such books being, *Den Sorte Bog om De Syv Dodssynder* (The Black Book of the Seven Deadly Sins) by Dorte Karreboek (2007) Denmark: Alma, and *I Never Knew Your Name* by Sherry Garland (1994) New York: Ticknor and Fields Books. The former shows explicit cartoon graphics about the seven deadly sins whilst the latter deals with the suicide of a young male adult.

Should such books be read alone by children or should adults be available to respond to the kind of questions that will inevitably be asked? There is still much debate about whether children should be protected from controversial issues in books. However the fact remains that these and other such sensitive and emotional issues can be dealt with if adults are available to discuss any questions or queries that may arise.

### How can we respond to picturebooks?

The importance of responding to picturebooks is crucial to enable children to make meaning at all levels of complexity. It is essential that children are given the opportunity to talk about and respond to texts. As educators we need to understand that:

1. The complexity of picturebooks should not be underestimated
2. Teachers need a theoretical foundation and vocabulary to talk about images
3. There are numerous perspectives that one can bring to picturebooks
4. Picturebooks offer a connection between school based literacies and multiliteracies

11-year-old Matthew can have the last word:

You can never be too old for picturebooks. I used to have a picturebook called *Giraffes Can't Dance* and I loved it, but my mum gave it away because she said I was too old for it but I think you can never be too old for picturebooks.

Janet Evans, Senior Lecturer in Education, Liverpool Hope University, Literacy and Educational Consultant  
www.janetevans.co.uk

A fuller version of this paper previously published in:

Evans, J. (ed) (2009) *Talking Beyond the Page*. London: Routledge

## IATEFL YLT SIG supported event:

*Children's Literature in Language Education International Conference* brings 360 delegates from 44 countries to Hildesheim, Germany

**Scholars from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, South and North America enrich the debate on children's literature in teacher education and for English language teaching.**

A major international English-language TEFL event took place from 25-27 February 2010, chaired by Janice Bland (Hildesheim University) and Prof Dr Christiane Lütge (Münster University) and hosted by the English Department, Hildesheim University. The conference was supported by the YLT SIG IATEFL, by the British Council and the DGFF (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Fremdsprachenforschung*). The first international conference of its kind, bringing together leading research on children's literature and ELT, thus interdisciplinary and forward thinking, *Children's Literature in Language Education – from Picturebooks to Young Adult Fiction* was a conference of unusual breadth. The focus was the ever-important matter of reading, multiple literacies and literary texts in language teaching throughout the years of formal education.

Despite the Lufthansa strike, which began on 19.02.10 and threatened to severely affect the conference, scholars from 44 countries worldwide found their way to Hildesheim.



In those countries where English is now taught already in the primary school, there is a huge and pressing demand for analytic frameworks of authentic materials that can cater for children's affective, aesthetic and educational needs as well as their functional- communicative language learning needs. The scholarly study of children's literature is now acknowledged as an integral and essential component of the wider study of literary, cultural and media texts. The international presenters in Hildesheim discussed works by leading authors of children's and young adult literature – who write for a critical and demanding audience and invite an intense dialogue with the text. Texts that are multi-layered, and provide an open and ambiguous reading experience, invite re-readings. These texts are highly satisfying to the slightly older second-language learners: not only for wide voluntary reading – extensive reading – that is considered by many researchers to be vital for language acquisition, but also as an opportunity for detailed text analysis and the negotiation of literary meaning – intensive reading – as the consummate apprenticeship into becoming a critical reader of literature and of cultural contexts. The more complex picture books with their layers of meanings – often



hidden in the pictures and picture/word interplays – are likewise highly suitable for thoughtful literary exchanges, and are a fine opportunity for rich English-medium education of young learners.



The conference began with an exemplary opening plenary. Dr Stephen Krashen (Professor Emeritus University of Southern California) spoke on **Free reading: Still a great idea**. Krashen is a supremely distinguished and internationally renowned linguist and educational researcher. Although a man to be feared – he has published a fearsome number of research papers, the list of prizes he has won for his scholarly writings is formidable, his willingness to enter battle for the educationally underprivileged is scary and our students are expected to study an alarming list of his hypotheses and writings – Krashen soon bewitched the audience in the Audi Max with his warm humour and charm, as well as with his erudition on extensive reading.

Dr Alan Maley and Andrew Wright followed Krashen with a joint plenary on the **Power of Story and Poetry**. The Audi Max was again spellbound by these globally celebrated lords of literature and storytelling in the EFL classroom. There were more highlights to follow on days two and three of the conference. The second day began with the plenary of Prof Dr Eva Burwitz-Melzer (Vice-Principal, Giessen University). Burwitz-Melzer spoke on **Approaching Literary and Language Competence: Picturebooks and Graphic Novels**. A leading German Literaturdidakter, Burwitz-Melzer spotlighted and beautifully illustrated – in every sense of the word – the **Visual Turn** in language teaching.

Peter Osborne, founder of Usborne Publishing, was a charming host at a pre-lunch wine reception. The tremendous wealth of the Usborne range of children's books could be admired in the exhibition, alongside children's literature from further publishers, both German and international. An evening wine reception was also arranged in the town hall, hosted by the Lord Mayor of Hildesheim, Dr Kurt Machens and Hildesheim University Principal Prof Dr Wolfgang-Uwe Friedrich.

No less than 70 presentations were offered during the three-day conference, organised in four strands. The post-conference proceedings, edited by Janice Bland and Christiane Lütge, will appear in 2012, published by Continuum International Publishing Group.

There were strands on:

#### **Extensive Reading**

**Pre-Teens and Teens: young adult novels and graphic novels**

**Young Learners: picture books, poems and nursery rhymes**

And also **Storytelling Sessions and Workshops** (chaired by IATEFL YLT SIG's Wendy Arnold and Dr. Caroline Linse)

#### **Future perspectives:**

The international nature of the many proposals submitted for this conference point to the worldwide relevance of the themes, and the urgent need for a platform for scholarly exchange: on the results of research, on examples of good practice and identifying new fields of enquiry.

A joint project is at an initial planning stage with Münster University: an Online Journal on Children's Literature in ELT, edited by Prof Dr. Christiane Lütge and Janice Bland, and supported by an international Advisory Board.

Hildesheim University is demonstrably aware of the major role teacher education plays in our society. Children's literature and young adult English-language literature across the world displays a stunning diversity, yet often remains entirely undiscovered by language teachers, and consequently also by English learners. This is

against the best interests of children, young language learners and society as a whole, as the highly important contribution reading makes to language acquisition and world knowledge has been well documented. We sincerely hope the outstanding and memorable Hildesheim event has made and will continue to make a difference.

One of the many kind emails following the conference:

*Congratulations for the success of the conference and thank you for all! It is and certainly will ever be one of the best conferences I have ever and ever taken part in. Both the content (scientific coverage) and the organisation were perfect. I am very happy to have taken part and I will share all the material I have brought back.  
Thank you for all once again and I look forward to keeping up.*

*Kind regards  
Amadou (lecturer, Mauritania)*



*Student delegates and Stephen Krashen*

## What is IATEFL YLT SIG?

**IATEFL Young Learner and Teenagers Special Interest Group (YLT SIG) has evolved into a flourishing worldwide network, supporting and informing some 400 ELT members worldwide. Our members are individual teachers and trainers, as well as institutions (institutional members) such as colleges and universities where teacher education takes place. We also cater for approximately 500 online members and reach thousands of teachers worldwide through our events.**

YLT SIG aims to support its members by providing information on recent developments in English Language education for children and teenagers, aged from 3 to 17, and by organising networking opportunities for its members. The YLT SIG is led by a committee of volunteers, who arrange discussions, organise conferences, produce publications and maintain the YLT SIG web site.

## What membership offers

- A bi-annual publication, C&TS (Children & Teenagers) to keep you informed and up to date, packed with practical ideas for teaching young learners together with the latest theories and book reviews.
- *IATEFL Voices*, IATEFL's own newsletter, published six times a year, to keep you informed about the wider picture.
- Occasional other publications
- Preferential rates for IATEFL-organised conferences and seminars and the opportunity to meet face-to-face with experts in the field.
- A comprehensive web site with a regularly updated web resources section and downloadable newsletter articles and discussion list summaries for members.
- An active e-mail discussion list to help keep you networked and informed and offering an opportunity to enhance your institutions and your own professional profile.

Theme of the next issue of C&TS will be  
**ART in ELT**



UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE  
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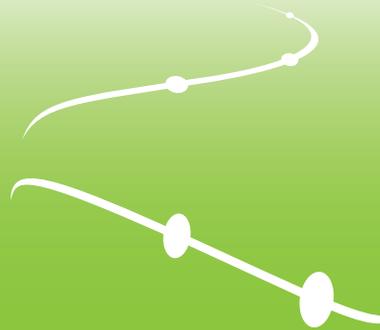
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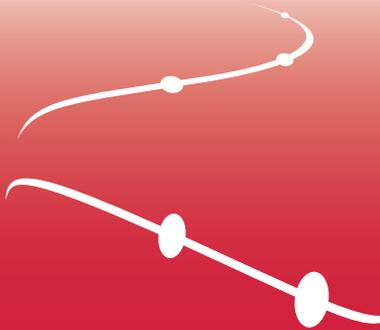
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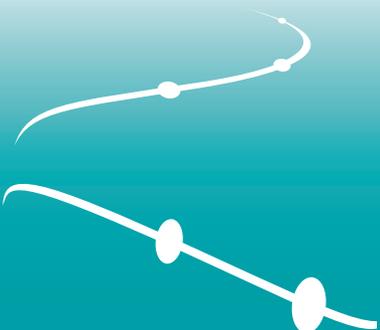
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\*CEFR - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages



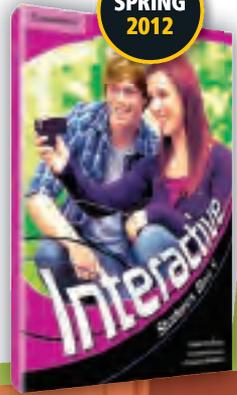
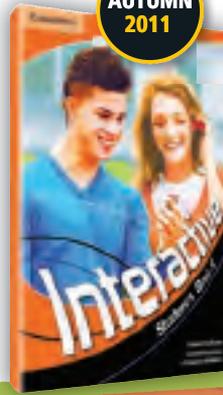
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