

# The Importance of Illustration in Children's Literature

By: Nicholas C. Johnson

# Why Illustration's are important in Children's Literature.

Illustrations are extremely important in Children's Literature. In the words of Arya Feather in her article ***The Role of Illustrations During Children's Reading*** "Illustrations are an integral part of picture story books. Bader (1976), for example, views the visual (illustrations) and verbal (words) as "interdependent components" of texts, both of which contribute to the development of story."

Essentially what Feather is saying in this quotation is: that picture's being read together with words help amplify each other. This is especially true for Children who still have a difficult time understand, and attending to an entire book.

Illustrations have six main components: Lines, Color, Textual Effects, Shape, Composition, and Narrative Quality. I will now describe each of these elements with the help of my pal Carl.

Hi, I'm Carl T. Crow, and I'm here to help..."sigh"  
***Illustrate the point.***



Is the fact this woman's name is feather Ironical? You know considering I'm a bird?

# LINE'S

**Line's** "Line is so inherently a part of every illustration that we forget that this element, too, can convey meaning.' (Huck Pg. 67)

Lines are an essential part of every drawing. When I start an illustration I always start with the lines in an image. Without lines in images you essentially can't create a scene. Where does your color, and detail go without the containment of lines?

Just look at my friend Carl here as an example. While he may look easy enough to draw The cup in his hand alone is seven lines or so. Without these lines, there is nothing to contain the color of the cup.

Line's also help convey distance, size of objects, and so many other elements of an illustration that they are surely the first part of any illustration that an artist will work on.

In comic book illustrations often time someone will pencil the lines of the image as to not make any mistakes, and then another artist will Ink the lines to give them a bolder look.

Line's? I seriously hate waiting in *Line's*.

There's nothing worse than waiting in line at the convenience store.



# COLOR

“Colors can evoke strong emotional connections in readers.” (Huck Pg. 68)

I completely agree with Huck in regard’s to their idea’s on color. Colors convey an extra level of detail which can help convey many different narrative plots to the reader.

I think the strongest example of how color can change the story you are trying to tell is background. Let’s say you use a nice light orange color for the background of your story. You may be conveying a sunrise or a sunset. Or if you use a deep purple you could be conveying an evening scene.

Now if you don’t use color at all in that example, and you just have a white background then the extra layer of time of day just disappeared from your book.

Color’s can really help children connect with the literature. I also imagine that extremely colorful illustrations help catch children’s attention.

There is  
nothing  
worse than  
a black,  
and white  
drink.



Your  
just  
gonna  
have  
to  
trust  
me on  
that  
one.



# TEXTUAL EFFECTS

I personally like to consider Textual effect's the final details that you would do in an illustration. These small details add an extra layer of effect to an already existing drawing.

If you look real closely at the picture of Carl here you can see that one of his eyes is shut. In order to add the textual effect of the shut eye, I had to re-color that eye several times in order to get the effect that I wanted.

Another Textual effect in a drawing of Carl, is the feathers of which his body is mostly composed of. I first draw a layer of ink to show the color. I then go over the feathers again with a less bold black pen. To give the effect of ruffles in the feathers.

Often times I find after I apply a layer of color to my illustration's my existing lines that define the image are faded under the layer of colored ink. At this point in time I often add another layer of black pen, which I would consider the layer of detail that really makes your images pop!

I think this extra layer of detail certainly help's children enjoy a picture that may be a bit flatter without the added details.

I have  
heard I do  
have a  
certain  
*effect* on  
people.



# SHAPE

Shapes “The illustrations in a picture-book exist on a two-dimensional plane. However, artists can choose to use elements such as color, value, or line to create a feeling of realism and depth.” (Huck Pg.68)

Shape is one of the most difficult aspects of drawing any illustration. When attempting to draw a picture you theoretically start out with a blank-page, and writing utensil. The issue of shape is immediately a problem from this point in your drawing.

How far away should your character be standing in the page? How tall should the tree's be in your background? How big should the cup in Carl's hand be in comparison to the rest of his body?

Still these shapes are very important in illustrations for children's literature. If you can not get the shapes in your drawings right, children may have a hard time understanding what you are attempting to draw. Which may hurt your overall narrative quality.

Honestly the only thing I know about *shape* is all the people telling me to *shape* up.



# Composition

“In good picture-books, no single element of art exists apart from the others. Rather, the illustrator uses principles of composition to unify elements on each page and on each succeeding page.” (Huck pg. 69.)

In laymen's term this quote illustrates the fact that all elements of a book must cohesively fit together in order to create a compelling piece of art.

For example often times when I draw Carl he spends his time in the woods. This makes sense for composition considering the fact that Carl is a bird from Maine.

As far as children are concerned, would a book like the *Very Hungry Caterpillar* make a lot of sense to children, if the Caterpillar was in space, and not in a woodland setting. My guess is the a child would not understand this composition.

Of course when considering composition in terms of children, the book writer may have to decide what composition is most appropriate for children.





# Narrative Quality

Narrative quality refers to the quality of the story told through the pictures and words in a book.

You could have the most spectacular drawings in your children's picture book, but if you are not telling a story with those pictures then is your book really a compelling piece of art?

Of course let's say you have written a really excellent poem for children, and you want to turn that poem into a children's book. You could have the most compelling poem ever written, but children may not identify with that poem, if you do not have drawing to accompany that poem.

As you can see both the story element, and illustration element of a picture book, must be included in order to have the best narrative quality.



Van Starr, Bob *Callow Corvus* 1-6, Van Starr Productions 2018.

As you can see by the series of cover's I have a lot of issue's. Therefore there is lots of narration, about me.



# CHILDREN'S ALPHABET BOOKS

The Children's alphabet book that I will be discussing in this power point is "Dr. Seuss ABC's."

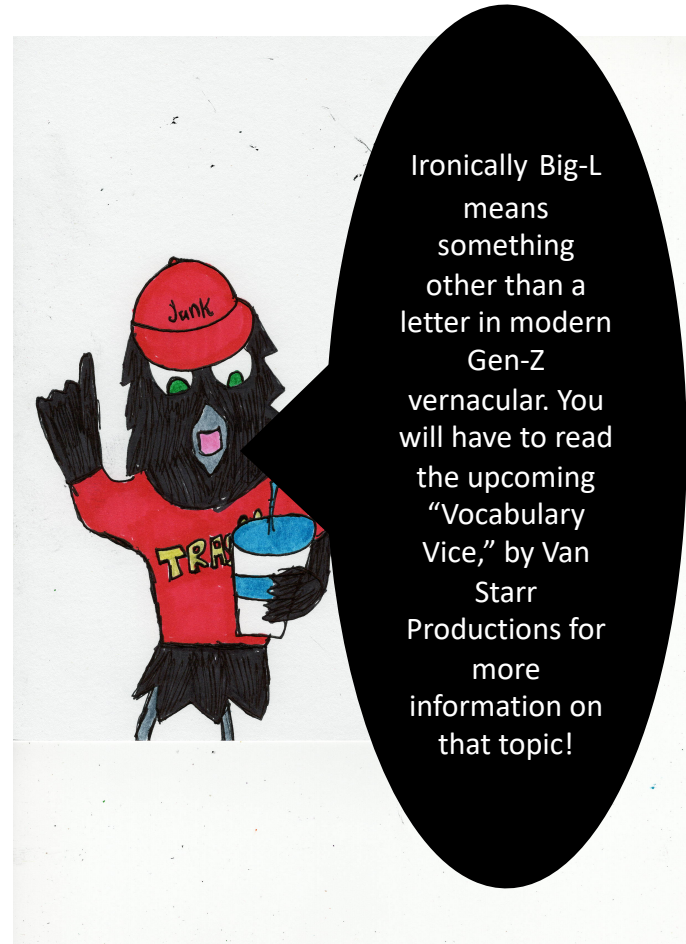
In Perry Nodelman's article *A is for what? The Function of Alphabet Books* the author states. "Alphabet books, then, might well be teaching something of significance. They certainly play their part in making children aware of the complexities of language in general and of the alphabet in particular."

Dr. Seuss, ABC's is a perfect example of a book that will help make children aware of the complexities of language. Dr. Seuss is an excellent illustrator. On top of this his choice of words in the ABC's are excellent to show children how many words with that letter, and sound exist.

This book has all the required elements of a great Illustrated book for children. Line's, Color, Shape, Composition, and texture. There is a reason why Dr. Seuss is still one of the most successful children's authors of all time!



Seuss, Dr. *Dr. Seuss Learn Your ABCs*. Five Mile Press, 2012.



Ironically Big-L means something other than a letter in modern Gen-Z vernacular. You will have to read the upcoming "Vocabulary Vice," by Van Starr Productions for more information on that topic!



# Chap-Books

Chapter books are also benefited by the use of illustrations. Pictured here is an illustration from Tom Thumb, a Chap Book written and illustrated by in 1882.



Ashton, John. *Chap-Books of the Eighteenth Century: Notes and Introd.* Blom, 1966.

I chose this picture from Tom Thumb to show another illustration of a Crow. Of course this Crow is not humanized as Carl is. Still this picture just goes to show that two artists from nearly two-centuries apart can still be drawing the same subject matter. Pictures in chapter-books can go a long way in showing part of what is occurring in a complex scene.

Just look at that Crow!  
He is so majestic! I think he is like my grandpa or something.

I really wish I could fly!



# PICTURE BOOKS

*The Very hungry caterpillar* is a very well written and illustrated picture book. The colors in *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* are especially catching. No wonder so many children are drawn to this book year after year.

The artist here seems to have colored the book in watercolor. The colors really pop, and blend together well here.

A BEAUTIFUL  
BUTTERFLY!



Carle, Eric. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Puffin, 2019.

The composition of this book is also very well designed. The book goes through all of the items that the caterpillar eats before he transforms into a beautiful butterfly. This is a very good picture book with great narration!

I'm really just mad that no-one ever call's me a beautiful butterfly....In fact no one call's me at all.



# Works Cited

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