Warning Concerning Copyright Restrictions

The Copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyright material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction not be "used for any purposes other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.
The Relationship of Authors and Illustrators

Some picturebooks are written and illustrated by the same person. An example would be Tomie dePaola's *Strega Nona* (1975), with dePaola responsible for both the exuberant illustrations and the whimsical text about Big Anthony's encounter with Strega Nona's magic pasta pot. Sometimes the author and illustrator are different people, as is the case with *Working Cotton* (1992), written by Sherley Anne Williams and illustrated by Carole Byard. Written in African American vernacular, Williams's text captures a hard day of work in the cotton fields in the early twentieth century, including the labor of children who contribute to the day's harvest. Byard's acrylic illustrations capture not only the beauty of the California landscape but also its intimidating vastness and the harshness of the work itself. Both Williams and Byard make equal contributions to the artistic achievement of the book.

Many contemporary publishing houses will match the author of a text with an illustrator; in these cases there could be a great deal of contact between the author and illustrator, or very little. But whatever the interaction between the book's creators, words and images need to be evaluated both separately and together. The text of a picturebook can be similar to a poem in the economy and deliberation of its phrasing (and sometimes the text of a picturebook literally is a poem, sometimes even a rhyming one). The images in a picturebook could in theory stand alone as if they were artworks suitable for framing on a wall, but in a true picturebook the quality of the interdependence between word and image is what is important.

ARTISTIC CHOICES IN THE PRODUCTION OF PICTUREBOOKS

All books require cooperation between the author/illustrator and the various people responsible for book production. Reading picturebooks critically means being aware of the many artistic choices that are required in putting them together, down to the minute details of production. Here are some of the design choices that go into making a picturebook.

The Size of the Book

Picturebooks come in many sizes. Suzy Lee's 2008 wordless book *Wave* is remarkable for its elongated, rectangular format (12.1 × 6.9 × 0.6 inches), in which a long picture of an ocean dominates each double-page spread, with the tiny figure of a
young girl playing joyfully at the water’s edge. Miniature books such as Margaret Wise Brown and Garth Williams’s *Little Fur Family* (1946) or Maurice Sendak’s *The Nutshell Library* (1962) give an impression of intimacy. Their small size may be a result of an assumption that children are well suited to small things (as we see in the tradition of miniature models or dollhouses).

**The Size of the Picture Against the Page**

The designer of a picturebook needs to decide to what extent a picture will fill a page and the amount of “white space”—the empty area—on the page. Some books, such as Richard Scarry’s *Busy, Busy World* (1965), are known for cramming pictures into the margins, setting a mood of hectic activity. In contrast, Ian Falconer’s *Olivia* (2000) has a number of pages on which the charismatic titular heroine is isolated against white space, making her the undisputed star of the action.

**The Composition of Objects on the Page**

In her book *Picture This: How Pictures Work* (2000), Molly Bang considers how placement of visual objects on the page creates narrative and artistic effects. Using a hypothetical layout of a retelling of “Little Red Riding Hood” as her case study, she establishes several compositional principles, including:

- Smooth, flat horizontal shapes give us a sense of stability and calm.
- Vertical shapes are more exciting and more active.
- Diagonal shapes are dynamic because they imply motion or tension.
- The middle of the page is the most effective “center of attention” because it is the point of greatest attraction.
- The larger an object is in a picture, the stronger it feels. (Bang 42–80)

**The Use, Amount, and Quality of Color**

Authors and illustrators need to decide whether to use color, and if so, how to use it. Will the entire illustration include color? What is the overall mood that the color or lack of color aims for? Warm colors (such as reds, oranges, and yellows) add energy, whereas cool colors (such as blues and greens) are more tranquil. If colors are less saturated (with more grey in them), they can seem restful; highly saturated
colors add intensity. Also important is whether the images are depicted with their shadows or other forms of shading; if the objects are shown to be shaded, they appear to have more depth, and shadows also add a sobering dimension. Kay Thompson and Hilary Knight’s *Eloise* (1955) (see page 1-5)—the story of an insouciant little girl who lives at the Plaza Hotel in New York City—combines black-and-white drawings with bright and saturated colors, especially pink. Cynthia Rylant and Diane Goode’s *When I Was Young in the Mountains* (1982) has a muted palette of greens, browns, and blues. The gentle colors add to the book’s lyrical and quiet depiction of a childhood in the Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia.

The Strength of Line

Lines can be very thin or very thick, and these choices will affect the kind of image produced. A text with a number of fine lines will seem very detailed and intricate, whereas bold lines are more vigorous and may seem less realistic. Mitsumasa Anno’s *Anno’s Journey* (1977) is a wordless story about one traveler’s journey through a nation in northern Europe, depicted from a vantage point in the air. Anno uses very fine lines to create a delicate, detailed, and intricate landscape that resembles an old-fashioned painting. In contrast, Lauren Child’s *I Will Never NOT EVER Eat a Tomato* (2000) renders brother and sister protagonists Charlie and Lola in expressive bold black lines that impart a cartoonish effect.

The Medium Used

The actual material used in the creation of picturebooks, especially the visual aspects, is called a medium (the plural form is media). Each medium comes with both possibilities and limitations, and each medium creates a definite mood. For example, crayon drawings are traditionally associated with the drawings of children. Oil paintings bring to mind high art. In the “Discussion and Essay Questions” for this chapter, you will compare books that use three different kinds of media, asking yourself about the general “feel” of each medium and the way in which each medium affects the kind of image produced.
Artistic Choices in the Production of Picturebooks

SOME MEDIA USED IN THE PRODUCTION OF PICTUREBOOKS

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<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Description of the Medium</th>
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<tr>
<td>Acrylic Paint</td>
<td>Acrylics can give both the transparent brilliance of watercolor and the density of oil paint. They dry more quickly than oil paints and are less fragile (less subject to damage).</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE:</strong> <em>Ladder to the Moon</em>. Maya Soetoro-Ng, author; Yuyi Morales, illustrator (Candlewick Press, 2011).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Block Printing</td>
<td>Block printing is achieved through woodcutting, wood engraving, or a similar relief printing technique; this creates a white line on a black surface. Lines created by block printing are often bold and rugged. Subtler effects and greater tonal depth are also possible by scoring and scratching the surface or by using the wood's grain itself.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE:</strong> <em>Only a Witch Can Fly</em>. Alison McGhee, author; Taeeun Yoo, illustrator (Feiwel &amp; Friends, 2009).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cartoon Drawing</td>
<td>Picturebook artists who use the cartoon form often use bold lines that are simple and energetic.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE:</strong> <em>Harold and the Purple Crayon</em>. Crockett Johnson, author and illustrator (HarperCollins, 1955). (See page 1-6.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collage</td>
<td>Collage is the assemblage of different forms, including—but not limited to—fabric, newspaper, cardboard, and tissue. It allows the artist to play with the artistic significance of objects, textures, and surfaces. Sometimes the artist chooses materials of personal significance, and sometimes the materials for collage are chosen because of their texture (or a combination of both).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Production</td>
<td>Through digital software tools and manipulation, artists combine digital painting with scanned images, paintings, and collages. Alternatively, the whole book can be created digitally.</td>
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<td><strong>EXAMPLE:</strong> <em>The Loud Book!</em> Deborah Underwood, author; Renata Liwska, illustrator (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011). Pencil and digital color.</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
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| Ink and Watercolor  | Ink drawings and “ink wash” techniques (the latter technique originated in China) "render atmospheric effects while simultaneously suggesting spatial depth" (Osborne 582). When combined with watercolors, the effect varies based on the method of watercolor painting used (see Watercolor).  
**EXAMPLE:** *In Like a Lion, Out Like a Lamb.* Marion Dane Bauer, author; Emily Arnold McCully, illustrator (Holiday House, 2011). |
| Oil Paint           | Oil paint dries slowly, and it registers brush strokes in great detail. It can be quite opaque or quite transparent. Paul Zelinsky noted of his choice of oils for *Rapunzel,* “I wanted to evoke the sense of heightened, but also distanced, reality that I feel looking at paintings from the Renaissance in northern Europe” (qtd. in Cummins 225).  
**EXAMPLE:** *Rapunzel.* Paul O. Zelinsky, author and illustrator (Dutton, 1997). (See page I-7.)                                                                                                                                       |
| Pencil Drawing      | Pencils use a mineral called graphite, which is capable of a large range from black to very light grey. Graphite material also allows for variations in density and depth, depending on the softness or hardness of the pencil lines. Pencil can also create a black-and-white cinematic effect.  
**EXAMPLE:** *In Coal Country.* Judith Hendershot, author; Thomas B. Allen, illustrator (Scholastic, 1987). Charcoal and pastels.                                                                                                           |
| Photography         | Photography creates a naturalistic and realistic effect. It is used in picturebooks to create a kind of documentary accuracy suitable to the depiction of historical events.  
**EXAMPLE:** *My People.* Langston Hughes, author; Charles R. Smith Jr., illustrator (Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing, 2009).                                                                                                                                                  |
| Watercolor          | Watercolor can appear transparent and luminous (filled with light). The watercolor medium is also known for its free, loose strokes. Watercolor creates different visual effects depending on the base and thinness (that is, the amount the paint is watered down). Thinner paint has a lighter tone and shows the paper more, creating a dreamlike atmosphere. Thicker watercolor paint is more realistic.  
**EXAMPLE:** *The Boy in the Garden.* Allen Say, author and illustrator (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010).                                                                                                                   |
Mixed Media

Many books make use of mixed media to tell a story. One example is Eve Bunting and David Diaz's *Smoky Night* (1994), in which the ongoing tensions between two families (one African American and the other Asian American) are defused as they help each other during the Los Angeles riots of 1992. The main illustrations are done on the right side of the page in acrylic paint and watercolor. Text on the left facing page is photographed against a background of objects from the riots. The account of the robbery of a Korean grocery store, for example, is placed over a photograph of dried rice and cereal, signifying the damage to goods and property. A description of a man fleeing the violence while stumbling over his dry cleaning is placed above a photograph of tangled plastic and hangers. The photographic backgrounds provide a realistic backdrop, while the bright colors and bold lines of the acrylic paintings underscore the struggles of the characters at a time of strife.

Setting

Picturebook authors and illustrators must decide whether the setting or background will be highly developed or minimal, and whether it will be rendered in a fanciful or realistic way. Sometimes books include no setting whatsoever, often relying on a pure color or white background. This is often true of board books and "basic concept" books such as Sandra Boynton's *Doggies: A Counting and Barking Book* (1984) (see page 176). The dogs in the book are portrayed against blank backgrounds, and—along with the counting and barking activities detailed—they are the only focus of the reader's attention. Trina Schart Hyman's *Little Red Riding Hood* (1983), a version of the Grimms' fairy tale discussed in Chapter 4, has a lushly drawn setting with a great deal of detail in the outdoor and indoor backgrounds to the action. In having such a fully defined background, reminiscent of a set for a drama, Hyman's books verge on the theatrical. Furthermore, the use of a fully realized place and time adds a historical dimension to an ostensibly timeless fairy tale.

Text Within the Pictures

Sometimes the author or illustrator will include some text within the illustrations to add an extra layer of interpretation or even irony. Maurice Sendak's *We Are All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy: Two Nursery Rhymes with Pictures* (1993) weaves together two traditional rhymes: "We Are All in the Dumps" and "Jack
and Guy Went Out into the Rye." In contrast with the innocent rhymes, the illustrations show homeless children living in an urban slum. The children hold (and take shelter) under newspapers featuring woeful headlines about war and poverty and also real estate advertisements hawking property at inflated prices. These "texts within the illustrations" draw the reader's attention to the troubled world in which the book is set and to the great division between rich and poor.

CONCERNS ABOUT PICTUREBOOKS

Picturebooks are an important part of childhood culture and literary culture, but their literary and cultural status raises many critical issues which we will explore below.

Availability and Cost of Picturebooks

Availability and cost are ongoing concerns about quality picturebooks. The 2005 Caldecott Medal winner was Kevin Henkes's *Kitten's First Full Moon*, which as of this writing sells for U.S. $17.99. Compared to a mass-market paperback retailing at a fraction of this price, this is expensive and raises questions about the accessibility of well-produced picturebooks, especially given the chronic underfunding of public libraries. Susan B. Neuman describes the results of a 2001 study she completed with Donna Celano focusing on the "differences in resources for low- and middle-income families":

Whereas children in the middle-income neighborhoods had multiple opportunities to observe, use, and purchase books (estimated at about 13 titles per individual child), few such occasions were available for low-income children (estimated to be about 1 book for every 300 children). Further, other avenues of access were limited or lacking. School libraries in poor communities were closed and sometimes boarded up, unlike school libraries in middle-income neighborhoods, which were thriving, with approximately 12 books available per child. Public libraries were open only for brief hours in low-income neighborhoods, compared with many open hours in middle-income neighborhoods. (Neuman 31)

Given these statistics, more needs to be done to ensure that picturebooks are available in public school classrooms and public libraries for students in all neighborhoods.