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A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words; Exploring Postmodern Picturebooks and  
Children's Understanding of Characterization

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### Abstract

This research considered how visuals in postmodern picturebooks influenced first graders' insights and understandings about characters and characterization. Unlike traditional picturebooks, postmodern picturebooks have the potential to engage students with visual images as well as the text. However, because of the complex visual representations, codes, and literary devices within postmodern picturebooks, teachers must take the time to explicitly teach students to navigate these picturebooks to promote not only visual literacy but, most importantly, higher-order thinking skills (HOT). This action research was conducted in a first grade class where fourteen students participated in focus groups and follow-up activities including open-ended questions, writing and drawings. The goal of this qualitative research was to explore the ways in which literary understanding and reading comprehension were influenced when aspects of visual literacy were explicitly taught. Overall, results from the present study suggest that children can read and comprehend images more accurately and efficiently when they are explicitly taught how to interpret specific visual elements of art and design in postmodern picturebooks.

*Keywords:* picturebook, characterization, comprehension, visual literacy, postmodern picturebook, codes, literary devices, higher-order thinking skills

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words; Exploring Postmodern Picturebooks and  
Children's Understanding of Characterization

As humans, we often make sense of the world around us through our senses (Serafini, 2014). Our sense of sight is arguably one of the most important because we encounter visual images every day. Presently, we encounter visual images in magazines, movies, television, advertisements, textbooks, websites, picturebooks, and so much more. Through picturebooks, the stage is set for a lifetime of meaning making through visual images. As noted by Serafini (2014), in the elementary classroom, the picturebook is one of the most universally read multimodal ensembles. During the first few years, picture clues can serve as one of the key ways that children gain understanding about what they read. For this reason, teachers need to make sure that they are helping children to closely examine the images in picturebooks to promote higher-order thinking skills (HOT). As Fang (1996) notes, the images within these books are one of the most effective tools for stimulating and extending children's creativity and imagination. Young children also use visual information in picturebooks to understand character traits, interests, and emotions—characterization (Prior, Wilson, & Martinez, 2012). Regardless of a child's age, visual images provide clues for the context of the story. Because characters are often described as the driving force of stories, children need higher-order thinking skills to develop deeper levels of meaning when they are reading (Cullinan & Galda, 1998).

Historically, picturebooks<sup>1</sup> have followed a traditional pattern in that the pictures follow along with the text in almost a passive way. However, postmodern picturebooks diverge from this common mode of picture-text relationship in a variety of ways. The elements of a

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<sup>1</sup> Several professionals in the field of picturebooks have different spellings: *picture book*, *picture-book*, and *picturebook*. Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007) use the compound word *picturebook* to represent the unification of text and art. Throughout this research, I will also be using Wolfenbarger's and Sipe's compound word *picturebook* to refer to these types of texts.

postmodern picturebook range from telling a traditional story from a different perspective to multiple narrators to disruptions and from traditional time and space relationships in the narrative to unexpected twists and turns, as well as ambiguity and unpredictability (Sipe & Pantaleo, 2008). These picturebooks contain complex visual representations that break traditional expectations of what a picturebook is. However, these books have the potential to engage students in making meaning. Therefore, teachers need to take the time to help students navigate through the images contained in these complex books.

Typically, teachers use visuals to help students attend to the designs, features, and structures that are incorporated in various multimodal ensembles. For instance, a picturebook is a multimodal ensemble that combines words and visual images (Sipe, 2012). Readers are able to construct meaning by looking at the visual images, written text, codes, and design elements of a picturebook (Sipe, 2012). Picturebooks are popular in the lower grade levels because they are a unique visual and literacy art form (Sipe & Wolfenbarger, 2007). Picturebooks also encourage children to be more creative when they are constructing meaning (Fang, 1996). However, are teachers using the visual images and various design elements depicted in picturebooks to help students construct meaning? If so, are they also using them to encourage higher-order thinking skills? A fundamental part of the curricula should be focused on higher-order thinking skills because they encourage students to become critical thinkers.

Theorists and educators in the field of visual studies have found it very difficult to agree upon a definition for visual literacy. Throughout this research, I employ Serafini's (2014) definition. He states that visual literacy is "the process of generating meanings in transactions with multimodal ensembles, including written text, visual images, and design elements, from a variety of perspectives to meet the requirements of particular social contexts" (p. 23). In other

words, one must be able to make sense of visual images in a variety of different areas or modes. This might include photography, painting, sculpting, films, charts, diagrams, and so much more. Multimodal ensembles are texts that are composed of textual elements (i.e. written language), visual images (i.e. paintings), and design elements (i.e. borders). Today, students need to know how to make meaning using all of these modes in order to expand the repertoire of reading comprehension strategies.

With comprehension comes characterization, which incorporates character traits, motivations and goals, feelings, and relationships (Prior, et al., 2012). Young children must attend not only to the written text in picturebooks but also the visual images if they want to better understand the characters (Prior, Wilson, & Martinez, 2012). For instance, illustrators may convey meaning about characters through the use of color and the positioning of the character on the page (Moebius, 1986; Nodelman, 1988). Understanding of characterization in picturebooks may help students develop deeper levels of meaning.

As it pertains to characters', feelings are not usually explained in words because the visual images or the characters themselves can depict them much better (Sipe, 2012). Words in a picturebook come alive in relation to the pictures. One question to consider might be how visuals in picturebooks explain how the characters are feeling? A postmodern picturebook breaks the traditional expectations of what a picturebook is and how narratives are presented (Serafini, 2014). In this research, I explored the ways that the visuals and picturebook codes were used to better understand elements of characterization in postmodern picturebooks.

Traditionally, teachers have read to students and casually allowed the students to quickly glance at the picture. However, with postmodern picturebooks varying in their presentations of visuals, perhaps gone are the days when a quick glance would clue students in to what was going

on in the story. Because of more complex visual characterization in postmodern picturebooks, teachers must take the time to teach children how to closely examine images within these picturebooks to promote not only visual literacy but, most importantly, higher-order thinking skills.

### **Literature Review**

Visual literacy is multimodal, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and collaborative (Kennedy, 2010). Visual literacy could be considered a universal language because most humans all over the world can understand visuals. For instance, sports team logos, automobile emblems, product packaging labels, and so on become symbols that adults and children assign recognition and meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Visual images signal meaning without the accompanying text because they are linked to various places, experiences, and visual media (Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007). Serafini (2014) has demonstrated that visual images encountered every day play a significant role in how we make sense of the world and, most importantly, how we see ourselves. He has described being visually literate as the ability to make sense of the images and multimodal ensembles encountered in various settings using a variety of lenses to interpret and analyze their meaning potentials (Serafini, 2014). The world is becoming more multimodal, and teachers must take the time to explore the variety of modes that are available to students today. Teachers must also be able to demonstrate the strategies and skills that are necessary for navigating and analyzing multimodal ensembles. It is more critical than ever for students to be well versed in multimodal ensembles because of the convergence of all these varying mediums. Most importantly, teachers also must promote students' engagement, visual literacy, and higher-order thinking skills.

### **Visual Literacy**

Serafini (2014) has noted the history of the term *visual literacy* and how various theorists (e.g. Debes, 1968; Fransecky & Debes, 1972; Ausburn & Ausburn, 1978; Messaris, 1994; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001; Bamford, 2003; Chauvin, 2003; Avgerinou, 2009; Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011) in the field have expanded the definition over the years. In 1968, the term *visual literacy* was coined by John Debes, who worked for Eastman Kodak (Serafini, 2014). Debes (1968) also published a newsletter entitled *Visuals Are a Language* within which he referred to visual literacy as “the strategies and skills one needs to make sense of visual images” (p. 21). Debes and Fransecky (1972) expanded the definition by asserting that visual literacy is a group of *vision competencies*. They defined *vision competencies* as the cognitive abilities that are used for understanding visual images (Debes & Fransecky, 1972). Over time, the definition of visual literacy has shifted from a cognitive skills perspective to sociocultural and critical perspectives (Serafini, 2014). For instance, Sturken and Cartwright (2001) asserted that the definitions of visual literacy should not solely focus on perceptual and cognitive abilities but should also include how visual images function in sociocultural contexts and how the *practice of looking* inform our lives and identities. Despite the ongoing endeavor to expand the definition, Chauvin (2003) has stated that all definitions of visual literacy are debatable and used interchangeably, thus creating confusion and disagreement within and across fields of study. Generally speaking, the field of visual literacy and picturebooks are somewhat related because picturebooks are a type of visual literacy that young children are exposed to before learning to read words.

### **Picturebooks.**



Still, picturebooks offer many opportunities for emergent and novice readers to develop and foster visual literacy (O'Neil, 2011). In the elementary classroom, picturebooks can be used to help children gain an understanding of what they are reading by looking at the visual images. The current trend in the field of visual literacy primarily focuses on how children actively engage in making meaning while reading the pictures as well as the text in various types of multimodal ensembles. Reading the text and pictures are crucial in developing deeper levels of meaning (O'Neil, 2011). In several of my previous student-teaching experiences, I have observed the lower grade levels incorporating picturebooks into their curriculum. In one of my previous Kindergarten classrooms, I observed a child "reading" a picturebook by making a story out of the pictures. Most likely, this child was showing emergent reading behavior. This observation also demonstrates the significant impact that visual images have on students' reading comprehension because full comprehension of picturebooks is typically dependent on the reader's ability to read the pictures as well as the text (O'Neil, 2011).

#### **Picturebook codes.**

In this research, I explored the ways that the visuals and picturebook codes are used to better understand elements of characterization in postmodern picturebooks. Moebius (1986) states that picturebooks are embedded with various codes that call students' attention to the design and communicative aspects of "marking the deeper channels of modern art-form" (p. 143). There are five picturebook codes that Moebius (1986) claims are essential for supporting students' interpretations and analyses of picturebooks: codes of position and size, codes of perspective, codes of the frame, codes of line, and codes of color. Teachers should have an understanding of these codes when teaching students how to navigate picturebooks because students can gain access to the meaning potentials used in the creation of visual art forms

(Serafini, 2014). Sipe (2000) asserts “It is puzzling that the visual aspects of picturebooks have not been the object of more empirical research, given their potential for meaning making. In this regard, children’s learning of illustration codes and conventions deserves more attention from researchers” (p. 273).

For the purposes of my research, I plan to call students’ attention to codes of body language, facial expressions, composition, and color because they relate to characters and characterization. While body language, facial expressions, and composition are not a part of Moebius’ five picturebook codes, they are still essential for supporting students’ interpretations and analyses of visuals in picturebooks. Body language and facial expressions are very similar in nature because they both convey emotion through nonverbal communication using one’s body. Typically, one is able to recognize how a character is feeling by looking at these two types of nonverbal cues. Composition is the arrangement of details in the picture (Serafini, 2014). Composition also relates to how close or far away a character(s) is from the reader. For instance, if a character is closer to the reader, it might mean he or she is demanding attention (Serafini, 2014). If a character is farther away from the reader, it might mean he or she wants the reader to get involved in the action of the story (Serafini, 2014). Color can be used to convey emotion, and it can also affect the mood or emotional impact of an image (Serafini, 2014). Colors can be associated with specific emotions. For example, the color red might be associated with anger. Overall, calling students attention to these picturebook codes might help them better understand the characters and their emotions, as well as understand the picturebook as a whole.

There is a common theme amongst researchers in the field of picturebooks; several researchers (e.g. Bader, 1976; Sipe, 1998; Nodelman, 1988; Marantz & Marantz, 1988; Schwarcz & Schwarcz, 1990; Kiefer, 1995; Eisner, 2008; Serafini & Youngs, 2013) believe that

the text-picture relationship represented in picturebooks work together to create a story. In other words, the story would not be complete without the other. Sipe (1998) uses the word “synergy” to illustrate the text-picture relationship in picturebooks. In other words, readers can construct meaning by responding to either the text or the images or both. In a similar way, Lewis (2001) uses the term “polysystemy” to illustrate how the story emerges out of text and pictures working together to do so. Lewis (2001) also expanded Meek’s (1991) idea that words and pictures “interanimate” each other. In other words, a picturebook could never fully tell a story using only words or only pictures.

Traditional picturebooks have a linear structure in that the narrative follows a beginning-middle-end sequence (Serafini, 2014). Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) have identified three types of interplay between written language and visual images: symmetrical, enhancing, and contradictory. An interplay is the relationship between visual images and words (Serafini, 2014). One of the most frequently encountered types of interplay in books for young readers is the symmetrical interplay (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). A symmetrical interplay is when the written text provides similar information to the images (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). A traditional picturebook might have a symmetrical interplay; however, it is almost impossible for visual images and written text to be symmetrical because written language does not always provide the same information to the images (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Most picturebooks have an enhancing interplay because the visual images enhance or amplify the written text (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). That is to say, the written text offers additional information to the visual images and vice versa. One should consider whether or not using the compound word *picturebook* to represent the unification of text and art is appropriate. Is there a more concrete word? Are there other types of picturebooks in which the illustrations present a meaning that is contrary to the

written text? If so, should the compound word *picturebook* still be used if the words and illustrations are not in alignment? Such is the case with many postmodern picturebooks.

### **Postmodern Picturebooks.**

Postmodern picturebooks have unique designs and structures, and they often have unexpected twists and turns (see, for instance, Sipe & Pantaleo, 2008). This, in turn, challenges the reader to deal with openness and ambiguity by focusing attention, instead, on the visual images (Serafini, 2014). Most postmodern picturebooks would be considered as having a contradictory interplay<sup>2</sup> because the visual images provide information that is contradicted by the written text (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Readers are required to become an active participant when interpreting postmodern picturebooks (Serafini, 2012). However, young children can miss the details in these complex visual representations or fail to understand what specific details mean (Schickedanz & Collins, 2012). These picturebooks can be complex because they are multimodal, meaning they include more than one mode or system of meaning (Serafini & Youngs, 2011). For instance, visual images, design elements, and written language may be incorporated in these texts. Teachers need to take the time to help students attend to the visual images and design elements within these picturebooks to help them construct meaning (e.g. Anstey, 2002; Goldstone, 2004; Sipe, 2008; Serafini, 2008). The use of postmodern picturebooks adds to students' ability to not only read but to understand, interpret and apply meaning from texts that embellish what it is to be literate (Turner, 2014 ). Overall, postmodern picturebooks provide students with the opportunity to voice what they believe the story is about.

Postmodern picturebooks are a product of the twenty-first century. Antsey (2002) claims postmodern picturebooks look differently and are meant to be read differently. Pantaleo (2004)

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<sup>2</sup>Another word for contradictory interplay is counterpoint— words and pictures tell different stories (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001).

notes that these books use various metafictional devices to emphasize the fictional state of the book. Metafictional devices are designed to interrupt the readers' expectations and produce multiple meanings and readings of picturebooks (Mackey, 2003). For instance, several postmodern picturebooks use multiple narrative—more than one character or narrator offers their perspective of the story (Booker, 2012). This, in turn, challenges students who are accustomed to the traditional narratives presented in classic picturebooks. However, students are able to engage and interact with these story characters because they invite readers to become involved in the story. Students also play an integral part in creating parts of the narrative by developing their own perspectives (Turner, 2014). Through the use of postmodern picturebooks, students are provided with the opportunity to engage with visual images as well as the text. These books also elicit creative and novel responses. However, because of the nature of their complexity, teachers must take the time to teach students how to navigate and analyze the visual images as well as the text.

### **Characterization & HOT**

Previous research has pointed out that long after finishing a picturebook, students, as well as adults, still recall the names and personalities of characters (Cullinan & Galda, 1998). Emery (1996) argued that “character states, such as their desires, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs, are the glue that ties the story together” (p. 534). This is characterization. Characterization is an element of comprehension because a student is able to gain understanding from the text as they think about the characters' appearance, feelings, decisions, responses, and how they treat other characters (Prior, et al., 2012). Serafini (2008) argues that comprehension should really be called comprehending because it is an action verb and connotes a process of actively constructing meaning. Topics that are related to story characters interest young children because they tend to

identify with characters more than any other story element (Applebee, 1978). Most picturebooks have at least 36 pages and therefore very few words. Therefore, a character must be appealing through visual images in order to gain the reader's interest and engagement. Through postmodern picturebooks and the characters the reader meets there, students have the opportunity to make new friends, seek new adventures, visit new places, and much more.

If teachers want students to develop deeper levels of meaning when discussing characterization, they should call students' attention to the aforementioned picturebook codes. Codes of position and size represent where characters and objects are placed in an image (Moebius, 1986). Moebius (1986) claims that the position of characters and objects affects how we interpret them visually. For example, elements that are placed in the center of an image are given more attention than those placed in the periphery (Moebius, 1986). The size of a character or object is also important when considering students' understanding of characterization (Moebius, 1986). For example, a character who appears large may have more authority than a character who appears small.

#### **Picturebook codes.**

Codes of perspective represent how we are positioned in relation to the setting or characters. Such an image changes how we interpret the scene and various actions and events (Moebius, 1986). For instance, a teacher might ask a student the following questions: Can you see the horizon? Moebius (1986) argues that the sudden appearance or disappearance of the horizon signifies danger. Where is the main character in relation to the horizon, is he/she grounded or floating? Lastly, does the setting seem flat or have depth? The setting has a direct influence on the characters in a story. If the setting appears to be flat, the character may be less open minded. On the other hand, if the setting has more depth, the character may be more open

minded. Overall, these specific picturebook codes could help students' develop deeper levels of meaning when discussing characterization. However, teachers must take the time to help students use the codes to make meaningful interpretations.

Much of the recent research has not considered the need for teachers to promote HOT when discussing characterization or images. Miri, David and Uri (2007) argue that HOT enables students to find value in what they are reading. HOT also enables students to read *beyond* the lines. In other words, the student is able to make connections, ask questions, and find new solutions to problems. Oftentimes, teachers ask students' rote questions after reading a text. Although these questions are necessary at times, HOT enables students to think critically. The picturebook codes, as well as the metafictional devices used in postmodern picturebooks, enable students to think critically (Turner, 2014). For instance, teachers should call students' attention to codes of position and size as well as codes of perspective when discussing characterization. Postmodern picturebooks have the potential to support students' ability to critically reflect and articulate what they believe the story is about (Turner, 2014). If teachers take the time to help students use the codes and metafictional devices used in postmodern picturebooks, they will develop critical thinking skills. Today, these skills are an important element in what it is to be both visually and critically literate (Turner, 2014).

In order for children to gain insights and understandings about characters and characterization, they must explicitly be taught how to closely examine the visual images within postmodern picturebooks. Perhaps this will promote not only visual literacy but, most importantly, higher-order thinking skills. With the proliferation of postmodern picturebooks and more of a demand for visual literacy, more research is needed that considers how teachers instruct students on interpreting images. This is important because visual literacy begins when

students are young and are still engaging with picturebooks. The purpose of this research is to better understand how teachers explicitly teach students to examine the visual images within postmodern picturebooks to make meaning.

### **Methods**

The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore the ways in which literary understanding and reading comprehension are influenced when aspects of visual literacy are explicitly taught.

### **Setting**

I was placed at a Public Elementary School in Central Virginia. It is located in a rural area. The county is about 407 square miles. This elementary school serves about 758 students, from Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The highest ethnic population in this particular Elementary School is Caucasian, making up a total of 60.60%. The next is Black or African American with 15.58%, Hispanic with 14.14%, Asian with 1.44%, other with 7.85%, American Indian with 0.26%, and finally Hawaiian with 0.13% of the student population. Within the school, I worked in a first grade class with a total of 19 students and a teacher who had been teaching for twelve years.

### **Participants**

This action research was carried out in an Elementary School located in Central Virginia. Students were selected from the first grade class in which I completed my student teaching internship. The first grade class was composed of 19 students. There were 12 males (63.15%) and 7 females (36.8%). I analyzed data for 14 students, 6 females (42.8%), and 8 males (57.1%). The mean age range of participants was 6-7 years old.

### **Methods and Procedures**



I used a qualitative approach, wherein I was a participant-observer. The research was conducted in a first grade class. The selection of texts was a critical aspect of this research endeavor, therefore, I used purposeful sampling for selecting the books. I established a selection criteria based primarily on the qualities and characteristics of postmodern picturebooks, with a focus, primarily on picturebook codes. I used the following selection criteria: a) body language, b) facial expressions, c) composition, d) color, and e) multiple narrative elements in postmodern picturebooks.

### **Procedure**

Data collected in this study included semi-structured interviews in the form of focus groups, audio recordings and transcriptions, observations, field notes, student drawings and writings. Pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality of all students. Once the parents and students agreed to participate in the study, I began working with students in focus groups (See Appendix A & B). Students were placed in focus groups based on the reading groups they had been working in throughout the year. The study lasted 4 weeks and consisted of meeting with the students 2 times per week for approximately 15 minutes each time. During this time, I asked the students open-ended questions (See Appendix C) based on the text.

I employed Serafini's (2014) curricular framework for organizing the way that I supported the students' experiences with postmodern picturebooks. The curricular framework was organized into three phases: 1) exposure, 2) exploration, and 3) engagement. When I first met with focus groups, I exposed students to a wide variety of visual images in picturebooks. Then, I explicitly taught students how to navigate postmodern picturebooks by calling their attention to various picturebook codes and multiple narratives— exploration phase. I used *Yo! Yes?* written and illustrated by Chris Raschka (1993) as my mentor text to explicitly teach the

picturebook codes. In each of the meetings, only two picturebook codes were selected per day. Lastly, I invited students to engage in the production and or interpretation of the visual images presented in postmodern picturebooks through drawing and writing responses in their provided notebooks. I collected written work from their notebooks, and took photographs of child-created products.

During the engagement phase I used an adapted version of Anderson and Richards (2003) *What do I see? What do I think? What do I wonder?* (STW) strategy (See Appendix D). This strategy promoted critical thinking skills and visual literacy skills. I began by asking the students to literally describe what they saw (text evidence). Then, I asked them what they thought the picture was communicating based on what they saw (i.e. interpretation and inference). Finally, students wondered about what was not communicated through the visual image by asking questions.

Two adapted versions of Serafini's (2008) noticing charts were also used during the engagement phase (See Appendix E, F, & G). The first noticing chart asked students to look at a picture of my choosing and describe what they noticed. Students were then asked to describe what the picture was communicating based on what they saw (See Appendix E). The second noticing chart asked students to choose one of the picturebook codes that we focused on and one of their favorite illustrations from the text. They were then instructed to draw their favorite illustration from the text. The picturebook code of their choice needed to be included in their drawing. After completing their drawing, students were instructed to write one sentence about what they noticed in the illustration, and one sentence about what it might mean (See Appendix F & G). These noticing charts also promoted critical thinking skills and visual literacy skills that carry over into other areas of the curriculum.

At the conclusion of the study, I used a book survey to see which postmodern picturebook illustrations were most and least appealing to the students and why. I also used this survey to gain a better understanding of how visual elements of art and design in postmodern picturebooks can be used to support students understanding (See Appendix H). I chose to work with individual students rather than small groups so that other students' opinions and beliefs would not influence their answers.

### **Materials**

I used purposeful sampling when selecting the postmodern picturebooks. I chose author-illustrators whose works were mentioned frequently in the literature as exemplary postmodern picturebooks. I also established a selection criteria based primarily, on the qualities and characteristics of postmodern picturebooks, with a focus, primarily on picturebook codes.

I selected four postmodern picturebooks based on my selection criteria as well as their potential to engage students (See Appendix I). Some of the chosen postmodern picturebooks blurred the boundaries between postmodern and traditional picturebooks. I also chose picturebooks that were considered to be culturally relevant. The first two picturebooks, *Yo! Yes?* written and illustrated by Chris Raschka (1993), and *Mr. George Baker* written by Amy Hest, illustrated by Jon J. Muth (2004), were chosen based on a two week friendship unit. The other two picturebooks, *Madam President* written and illustrated by Lane Smith (2008) and *Abe Lincoln's Dream*, also written and illustrated by Lane Smith (2012), were chosen based on a two week President and famous Americans unit.

### **Data Analysis**

The study was conducted using Serafini's (2014) curricular framework and was organized into three phases: a) exposure, b) exploration, and c) engagement. Using audio recording, transcripts, field notes, observations, student writing/drawing responses, and a book survey I was able to analyze students literary understanding and reading comprehension when aspects of visual literacy were explicitly taught. Field notes and transcripts of audio recordings made during focus group discussions were the primary data sources.

Living in a world in which we are bombarded with visuals every second, it is important to understand how such visuals impact students' understanding and comprehension of literature, especially at a young age during which picturebooks are appropriate. During my time student teaching in a first grade class, I conducted research to determine how the visuals in postmodern picturebooks influence literary understanding and comprehension, especially when aspects of visual literacy were explicitly taught.

#### **Exposure and Exploration Phase.**

I first introduced the notion of visual literacy by taking the students through a picture walk—or an instance in which I do not read the words from the page but rather allow the students to infer what is going on in the story simply based on the illustrations. Once we completed that step, I then introduced picturebook codes. Since I only met with these students twice a week, time was limited, so I introduced two picturebook codes per day (See Appendix J). The codes I opted to use were body language, facial expressions, color, and composition. To explicitly teach these codes, I would use examples from the picturebooks as well as acting out or demonstrating these codes using myself. Then, I would ask students to demonstrate these codes. For example, I might instruct them to show me what it looks like when they are happy, sad, excited, mad, and so forth. In one particular instance, students in one group role played a

character from *Yo! Yes?* Before role playing took place, I made sure students were aware of my expectations. I expected students to answer how they felt playing their character at the end. First, I instructed two students to role play the part of the black child, and two students to play the part of the white child. After doing so, both children playing the part of the black child said, “I felt confident playing this character!” Whereas, the other two students’ role playing the part of the white child both said, “I felt sad in the beginning of the story because I had no friends, but at the end of the story I was happy because I made a new friend!” Students were able to answer how they felt playing each character from the story based on their characters body language and facial expressions. They were also able to read the characters emotions and interactions through facial expressions and body language based on the illustrations.

#### **Engagement Phase.**

Once the picture walk was completed and the picturebook codes were taught, the students and I would then go back through the picturebook together. I asked students open-ended, and leading questions (See Appendix C) to scaffold their understanding of the story. During this time, students would make connections with the pictures; they began to interpret the pictures coupled with the story. Obviously, first graders are not yet skilled in the art of interpreting colors as they reflect mood and emotion, so I gave them laminated cards in specific colors with pictures representing at least one emotion the color represents. For example, I pasted a face looking calm on a blue card and then laminated it. I explained to the students that colors can mean more than just the one emotion portrayed on the card. Students would sometimes use these cards to explain what a color in the story might be representing in terms of the character. This was a very hands-on class, so these cards were left in the independent reading area for students to reference

throughout the day. This picturebook code was the most problematic for this set of students because they often had trouble recalling what color was associated with a certain emotion.

The one picturebook code I thought would provide the most difficulty was composition, yet the students seemed to have the most fun with it. Composition, for the students, was defined as the details of the picture or even how close or far away the character(s) was on the page. I told students that if a character were closer to them on the page (larger), then that character was demanding attention in some way. In an effort to help the students understand composition, we played “I Spy,” a game that is familiar to most students. For example, in *Madam President*, one student shouted, “I spy a cat!” Later, one would say, “There is that cat again!” In one particular group, we were also reading *Madam President* and a student said, “I spy a note on the door, I don’t know what it says but it looks important!” The note was in cursive, and it had the character’s name, Katy written on it. After reading the note, one of the students said, “That could be the character’s name!” This observation demonstrated that students were closely noting the details within the illustrations because in *Madam President*, the main character never introduced herself. That small note was the only way that a reader would ever know the main characters name. Students noticed recurring pictures, characters, animals, and so forth. Then, I would ask them what they thought that particular item they spied meant.

### **Drawing and Writing Responses.**

In an effort to see how students engaged in the production and or interpretation of the visual images in postmodern picturebooks, students also had drawing and writing responses in their knowledge notebooks, as one student called them. She said, “This should be called our knowledge notebooks because they have all of our knowledge inside!” From then on, the name stuck and we called them our knowledge notebooks. Typically, drawing and writing responses

were completed on day two of our focus group meetings. First, I would ask students to tell me what we had read about the day before. Students were allowed to flip through their books to recall what we had read.

After reading *Yo! Yes?* I used a *See, Think, Wonder* (STW) chart (See Appendix D) Anderson and Richards (2003). First, I chose an illustration in the book that I considered to be significant in terms of our two picturebook codes that we focused on that day. The two picturebook codes that we focused on that day were body language and facial expressions. The illustration showed two children, one black and one white. The black child said, “Oh?” and the white child said, “No friends.” First, I instructed students to literally draw what they saw when looking at the illustration. After drawing, students needed to write at least one sentence about what they saw based on their drawing. Then, I asked students to draw what they thought this illustration meant. This part usually gave students the most difficulty because sometimes pictures and words might be saying different things and it is left open to students to interpret what they believe is going on. After drawing, students needed to write at least one sentence about what they thought the illustration was conveying based on their drawing. Lastly, I instructed students to come up with a wondering or question they had when looking at the illustration. For example, one student asked, “Where is the background?” In other words, this student wondered about the setting. Students were allowed to draw a picture and then write their question, or they could just write a question based on the illustration. This part also challenged students because it asked them to question why the author or illustrator chose to write or illustrate the pictures in a particular way. Students were also given the opportunity to verbally explain their drawings. Most students responded well to this illustration, and they were able to respond by drawing and writing how the character(s) felt based on their body language and or facial expressions.

After reading *Mr. George Baker*, I used an adapted version of Serafini's (2008) Noticing-Meaning's (NM) chart (See Appendix E). First, I chose an illustration in the book that I considered to be significant in terms of our two picturebook codes that we focused on that day. The two picturebook codes that we focused on that day were body language and color. The illustration showed two people sitting on the porch with their red backpacks, one adult and one child. First, I asked students to draw what they noticed when looking at the illustration. After drawing, students needed to write at least one sentence about what they noticed about the illustration based on their drawing. Then, students were instructed to draw what they thought this illustration might mean. Once again, this part gave students the most difficulty because it asked students to come up with their own interpretation of what they thought the illustration was conveying. For example, one student said, "Oooh, this is the hard part!" After drawing, students needed to write at least one sentence about what they thought the illustration was conveying based on their drawing. Students were also given the opportunity to verbally explain their drawings. Most students responded well to this illustration, and they were able to respond by drawing and writing how the character(s) felt based on their body language and or the color(s) used to express emotion.

After reading *Madam President* and *Abe Lincoln's Dream*, I used another adapted version of Serafini's (2008) Noticing-Meaning's (NM) chart (See Appendix F & G). The two picturebook codes that we focused on were body language and composition. These two codes were used when reading both of these picturebooks. Students were asked to choose one of the picturebook codes that we focused on and one of their favorite illustrations from the text. I made sure students understood their picturebook code of choice by asking them to express what it meant in their own words. They were then instructed to draw their favorite illustration from the



text. The picturebook code of their choice needed to be included in their drawing. For example, after reading *Abe Lincoln's Dream*, one student chose to focus on both body language and composition. Her favorite illustration portrayed Abe Lincoln crying (i.e. body language), and vibrant red roses surrounding him (i.e. composition). After completing their drawings, students were instructed to write one sentence about what they noticed in the illustration, and one sentence about what it might mean. Students were also given the opportunity to verbally explain their drawings. Most students appreciated the opportunity to choose their favorite illustration from these picturebooks. I was also pleasantly surprised to see that most students chose to use composition as their picturebook code of choice when responding to the visual. By providing a fun and relatable activity such as "I Spy," these first grade students were able to make sense of composition, as well as other literary elements in their writing and drawing responses.

### **Book Survey.**

At the conclusion of my study, I met individually with each of the students to ask them three questions related to the picturebooks that we read, as well as how they think illustrations can help readers (See Appendix H). The first two questions: 1) Which picturebook illustrations did you like the most? Why? 2) Which picturebook illustrations did you like the least? Why? were based solely on opinion and there were no right or wrong answers. Therefore, I chose not to interpret any results from these first two questions. The last question, however, was of particular interest to me because it asked: 3) "A picture is worth a thousand words." What does this mean? What are the advantages/disadvantages of using illustrations to tell a story? Students were instructed to verbally provide their opinion of what they thought this meant. Most of these first graders needed a little more clarification when I asked this question. Therefore, I restated the question as, how can pictures help you as a reader? Most students agreed that pictures can help a

reader better understand the story. One student said, “If you cannot figure out a word, then you should look at the pictures to figure out what the illustrator is telling you, and you can also look at the details in a picture to tell you what it means.” Another student said, “Looking at the pictures help me to see characters emotions.” These responses demonstrated students awareness and importance of illustrations when reading a text.

### **Results**

The following section describes the results that I found after analyzing my project data. Overall, results from the present study suggest that children can read and comprehend images more accurately and efficiently when they are explicitly taught how to interpret specific visual elements of art and design in postmodern picturebooks.

#### **Exposure and Exploration Phase.**

Calling students attention to the picturebook codes influenced their insights and understandings about characters and characterization because they were able to interpret how the characters felt based on their body language, facial expressions, color, and composition. Ultimately, students became sharper observers.

#### **Engagement Phase.**

Using open-ended questions, writing and drawing responses fostered higher-order thinking skills that carry over into other areas of the curriculum. These aspects also helped students look and think in introspective ways.

#### **Drawing and Writing Responses.**

Children were able to provide more complex responses to the visuals in picturebooks verbally rather than in writing. By discussing the images in picturebooks in a group of other children, they often reached conclusions that they may not have come to on their own. These

discussions deepened their understanding because it provided them with the opportunity to talk through their questions and ideas with others. Ultimately, this experience provided students with a voice.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of my study was to explore the ways in which literary understanding and reading comprehension were influenced when aspects of visual literacy were explicitly taught. Results indicated that children can read and comprehend images more accurately and efficiently when they are explicitly taught how to interpret specific visual elements of art and design in postmodern picturebooks.

These results align with some of the findings in the literature. When looking at illustrations, children arguably notice more detail than adults do (Arizpe & Styles, 2003; Kiefer, 1993). I will admit, students in the present study pointed out details that even I did not notice before. Students in the present study were explicitly taught to pay close attention to the picturebook codes used to make meaning when looking at illustrations. Such codes included color, facial expressions, and surrounding details among others. Arizpe and Styles (2003) claim that textual markers guide students through their reading and support them as they put together the pieces of the puzzle. The pieces of the puzzle describe the process of figuring out the picturebook as a whole (Arizpe & Styles, 2003). These textual markers are related to the picturebook codes used in the present study. Arizpe and Styles (2003) also pointed out that paying attention to all of these visual details and yet maintaining a sense of the big picture requires children to be incredibly “visually alert reader(s).”

**Differentiation.**

This first grade class consisted of students with diverse reading levels. Before the study began, my mentor teacher assessed students reading levels using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS). This System matched each student with an instructional and independent reading level and placed them into a reading group based on their abilities. I worked with four focus groups with reading levels ranging from C to J. Students in the two lower reading groups were just as skilled as the two upper reading groups when responding to the visuals in postmodern picturebooks. In fact, Arizpe and Styles (2003) found that these so-called struggling readers were actually more articulate interpreters of the visual. I was able to scaffold students understanding of the text by asking more leading questions, as well as differentiate instruction based on the needs of all students. Students were also provided with a challenge to demonstrate to themselves that they were capable of responding to the visuals in postmodern picturebooks. In the following example, a student in the lower reading group was asked to tell the story of *Mr. George Baker* using only the pictures to do so.

**Researcher:** Why are these two together?

**Amanda:** Maybe the little boy comes to sit with the older man so that he won't get lonely during the day. I think the older man's name is Mr. George Baker, like the title of the book.

**Researcher:** That is correct, his name is Mr. George Baker. Why do they both have backpacks?

**Amanda:** They are both going to school.

**Researcher:** Why would an older man like Mr. George Baker need to go to school?

**Amanda:** This was the only time the older man could go back to school after dropping out when he was younger.

**Researcher:** Why do you think Mr. George Baker dropped out?

**Amanda:** (After looking at the picture of Mr. George Baker drumming) Maybe since Mr. Baker was drumming, he did not have time to go to school when he was younger. I think he dropped out when he was younger, now he wants to go back to school.

These responses indicated that students in the lower reading groups were just as capable of providing complex responses to illustrations in picturebooks. I was able to scaffold lower reading groups understanding of the text by asking them more leading questions, providing fun and relatable activities for those struggling to stay engaged, as well as challenging them to believe in their reading abilities. It is also important to comment on how much these students in the lower groups enjoyed the books that I chose for this study. For instance, almost everyday students in the lower groups consistently asked me to read “my” books during their independent reading time. Overall, it was exciting to see how previously struggling readers became more confident and engaged in the reading process. This experience also helped me look past individual reading levels. Everyone was reading the same book, and this demonstrated to students that the playing field was leveled for all.

### **Voices of the Students.**

Nystrand (1997) indicated that understandings are enhanced through participation in literary discussions, and students benefit from this participation. In the present study, small group instruction allowed students to make and discuss their interpretations of the visual. These small group discussions also helped students put into words what they saw, as well as listening and responding to what their peers had to say. Rosenblatt (1976) emphasized the importance of readers’ active involvement in constructing meaning. Students were told from the very beginning

of the study that when looking at most picturebooks today (i.e. postmodern picturebooks), there is often more than one answer or interpretation when responding to the visual. These types of picturebooks challenged students to deal with openness and ambiguity, and focused their attention instead on the visual elements of art and design. This challenge was very apparent when students were asked to convey what they thought a particular illustration meant. When I called their attention to the picturebook codes embedded within the illustration, students were able to make sense of what the illustration meant. In the following example, students were trying to make sense of the smudges seen in *Yo! Yes?*

**Jack:** What are those smudges?

**Researcher:** I am not sure why the illustrator chose to put smudges on the pages. What are your thoughts?

**Carl:** Maybe the smudges are the boy's shadows!

**Researcher:** Wow, I never thought of it like that! Great observation!

**Jack:** It looks like their shadows are moving in the direction of their bodies!

**Researcher:** So, you think these are the boy's shadows that move in the direction of their bodies? Show me an example from the story.

**Jack:** (Flips to the page where the black child is pointing, and his shadow is in the shape or direction of his moving body) See, look at this page! The boy is pointing and his shadow is moving with his body.

**Researcher:** You all just taught me something!

**Carl:** We are only in the first grade, and we taught you something!

Throughout this study, students became fully engaged in the sense of playfulness and unique designs portrayed in postmodern picturebooks. Students even noticed things that I had not

noticed beforehand, and I enjoyed learning right alongside them. Furthermore, students helped me see these complex picturebooks from new perspectives. Ultimately, allowing students to voice their opinions, connections to the story, interpretations of the visual, and so forth demonstrated to students that what they have to say matters.

### **Limitations of the study.**

Unfortunately, my action research had its fair share of limitations. The main limitation from which all other limitations seemed to stem, was time. My research did not always go as planned because I only met with four focus groups twice a week for 15 minutes at a time. Because of time, not all students got to ask or answer open-ended questions, make connections, inferences, and so forth. Snow days also put my action research behind because of either being out of school entirely, or having two hour delays. Because of the time constraint, I was forced to adapt the lessons to the needs of each group. For example, after drawing responses were made in their STW and NM charts (See Appendix A-G), the two lower groups were allowed to verbally tell me their responses to what they saw and thought the illustrations were conveying. However, most of the time students in these groups wanted to write their responses. They were told to try their best when spelling words due to the limited amount of time. Another example in relation to time might be the fact that the two lower reading groups always spent three days with each of the postmodern picturebooks. Whereas, the two upper groups spent two days with each of the picturebooks. In other words, the two lower reading groups were always one day behind the upper reading groups. This was done so that students in the lower groups had the opportunity to a) first tell the story using only the pictures, b) read the story the following day, and c) respond to the visual using the picturebook codes that we focused on for that particular text. Ultimately, this gave these students more time to understand the picturebook as a whole.

There were some days that my student participants were absent from school. There were also days where students had to leave the room in the middle of the project. I also had to recognize that first graders are not always content to participate and pay attention to my explicit teachings of picturebook codes. Some students got distracted and wanted to talk about other things that were not related to the picturebooks or the codes. Such tangents were peripherally related to the task at hand. For example, while reading *Yo! Yes?*, a student wanted to share a story about the time he was trying to make a new friend at the playground.

There were other numerous factors which may have influenced the results. The four picturebooks that I chose were of different lengths, as well as reading levels. Because of the diverse reading levels, students in the lower groups needed more time spent on the books that were longer in length and more challenging. This may have delayed my study, however, I wanted all students no matter their reading levels to have the same opportunity to make sense of the picturebook as a whole, as well as respond to the visual elements of art and design.

### **Conclusions**

My research question asked, how can visuals in postmodern picture books influence first graders insights and understandings about characters and characterization? The purpose of my study was to explore the ways in which literary understanding and reading comprehension are influenced when aspects of visual literacy are explicitly taught.

The results of this research project indicated that children can read and comprehend images more accurately and efficiently when they are explicitly taught how to interpret specific visual elements of art and design in postmodern picturebooks. After explicitly teaching students the picturebook codes embedded within most picturebooks, they were better able to make sense of the visuals as well as the words. Students were also able to better understand how the



characters were feeling based on codes of body language, facial expressions, color, and composition. The pictures, furthermore, assisted struggling readers. In some instances, the words were simply too difficult or too long. The pictures offered visual and contextual clues to struggling readers so they, too, could keep up and feel a sense of accomplishment.

### **Implications for Future Teaching**

As I look ahead to my future teaching career, I think explicitly teaching students how to interpret the visuals within postmodern picturebooks is a skill that I would like to incorporate in my own classroom. I believe that this study greatly benefitted these first graders because I provided them with an opportunity to be heard. Students were able to observe, compare and contrast characters emotions, make inferences, connections, and come to conclusions when responding to the visuals in picturebooks. These skills are useful in other aspects of the curriculum. Working with students in small groups also greatly helped me in developing stronger individual relationships with each student. Each student brought their own background knowledge, experience, and interest to the group. By allowing students to participate in small group conversations, they were able to view picturebooks from numerous perspectives. Their responses throughout the guided reading groups allowed the students a safe venue in which to express their social and emotional reactions to and relationships with the characters. Floyd Copper, a picturebook illustrator says it best, “If a picture is worth a thousand words, what does that say about the power of a picturebook?” My hope is that this study has helped in some way to ensure that the visuals in picturebooks continue to provide students with powerful opportunities to think critically, creatively, but most importantly, to instill a love of reading.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Several professionals in the field of picturebooks have different spellings: *picture book*, *picture-book*, and *picturebook*. Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007) use the compound word *picturebook* to represent the unification of text and art. Throughout this research, I will also be using Wolfenbarger's and Sipe's compound word *picturebook* to refer to these types of texts.

<sup>2</sup> Another word for contradictory interplay is counterpoint— words and pictures tell different stories (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001).

## Appendices

## Appendix A

## Informed Consent Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Hello, my name is Emily Davis, and I am a student teacher in your child's classroom. I am currently a graduate student at the University of Mary Washington working towards my Masters in Elementary Education. A requirement of our program is to conduct an action research study in an area related to our studies. *I am inviting your child to participate in a research study I am doing. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to have your child participate or not. I am now going to explain the study to you. Please feel free to ask any questions that you may have about the research; I will be happy to explain anything in greater detail.*

I am interested in learning more about *how the visuals and picturebook codes are used to better understand elements of characterization in picturebooks. Picturebook codes are used to help children understand the words as well as the images in picturebooks.* For about four weeks, your child's class will be working in focus groups based on the reading groups they have been working in throughout the year. While meeting with the focus groups, I will explicitly teach students how to navigate picturebooks. Then, I will ask for opinions and reactions to the stories through verbal communications and drawings. I will also ask the students open-ended questions in order to promote higher-order thinking skills. *I am requesting permission to work with your child in these focus groups. I am also requesting to tape record your child in these focus groups. **This project will be part of your child's work for class. It will in no way require extra work for him or her.***

Your child's name will be kept confidential. His or her name will not appear in any papers in the project. All names will be changed to protect his or her privacy. Following the project, all samples I collect will be destroyed. Participation in this project will not affect your child's grade in any way. His or her participation in the study is voluntary, and you have the right to keep your child out of the study. Also, your child is free to stop participating in the study at any time. Your child would still participate in the classroom project, but data for the research study would not be collected from him or her.

The benefit of this research is that you will be helping me to understand the ways in which literary understanding and reading comprehension are influenced when aspects of visual literacy are explicitly taught. The only potential risk is that your child may be uncomfortable being interviewed. These risks will be minimized by assuring your child that there is no right or wrong answer, concluding the interview at any point if s/he would like to do so, and allowing him or her to skip questions s/he does not want to answer

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my University Supervisor, Dr. Roberta Gardner ([rgardner@umw.edu](mailto:rgardner@umw.edu)), chair of the UMW IRB, Jo Tyler ([jtyler@umw.edu](mailto:jtyler@umw.edu)), or myself ([edavis@umw.edu](mailto:edavis@umw.edu)). Please return this form by\_\_\_\_\_ . I look forward to working with you and your child!

Thank you,  
Miss. Davis



I have read the above letter and give my child permission to participate in this project.

---

(Parent/Guardian name)

---

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

I give my child permission to be tape-recorded.     Yes     No

---

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to keep all information and data collected during this research project confidential.

---

(Researcher Signature)

## Appendix B

## Student Assent Letter

“I understand that I am helping Miss. Davis with her project for school. It is okay that Miss. Davis will record my voice, and I know that if I have any questions I can ask her. Miss. Davis wants to understand how you see pictures using picturebooks. You will be talking in a group about your thinking using picturebooks, and you will be recorded while you talk. You can stop participating at any time if you decide you want to stop.”

Circle YES if you want to help Miss. Davis with her project. Circle NO if you do not want to help Miss. Davis with her project. You do not have to help Miss. Davis with her project, and you will not get in trouble if you circle NO.

YES ☺

NO ☹

Please write your name below:

---

## Appendix C

## General Framework of Open-Ended Questions





1. What did you notice about the picture?
2. How did the main character feel in the story?
3. What was your favorite part of the story, and why?
4. Who was your favorite character, and why?
5. Is the character looking at you? How does this affect you?
6. Is the character looking away or at someone or something else? How does this affect you?
7. How does the main character change in the course of the book?
8. What do you notice about the colors in the picture?
9. Did anything confuse you about the story?

Appendix D

Adapted version of Anderson and Richards (2003)

What do you see? What do you think? What do you wonder? (STW)

Directions: you may either draw or write what you see, what you think, or what you wonder.

What do you see?	What do you think?	What do you wonder
		<p>(questions)?</p> 
<p>What do you notice?</p>		<p>What does _____?</p>
		
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Appendix E

Serafini's Adapted Noticings-Meaning (NM)

Directions: Looking at an illustration, draw/write what you notice, and what it might mean.

Appendix F

Adapted Serafini's Noticings-Meaning (NM)

Directions: Pick one picturebook code from "Madam President." Then, choose one of your favorite illustrations. Make sure to include the picturebook code that you have chosen in your drawing. Write one sentence about what you noticed in the illustration, and one sentence about what it might mean.

Circle the picturebook code you are using:      Body Language                      Composition  
(details/how close character is to you)



What do you notice?

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What does it mean?

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Directions: Pick one picturebook code from “Abe Lincoln’s Dream.” Then, choose one of your favorite illustrations. Make sure to include the picturebook code that you have chosen in your drawing. Write one sentence about what you noticed in the illustration, and one sentence about what it might mean.

Circle the picturebook code you are using:      Body Language                      Composition  
(details/how close character is to you)

What do you notice?

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What does it mean?

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BOOK SURVEY

Directions: Please circle your answer. Books will be shown to children before circling their answer.

3. Which picturebook illustrations did you like the most? Why?

*Yo Yes*      *Mr. George Baker*      *Madam President*      *Abe Lincoln's Dream*      none

2. Which picturebook illustrations did you like the least? Why?

*Yo Yes*      *Mr. George Baker*      *Madam President*      *Abe Lincoln's Dream*      I liked  
all of the above

3. "A picture is worth a thousand words." What does this mean? What are the advantages/disadvantages of using illustrations to tell a story? (Student's will orally tell me their opinion).



## Appendix I

## Children's Literature

Hest, A., & Muth, J. (2004). *Mr. George Baker*. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press.

Raschka, C. (1993). *Yo! Yes?* New York: Orchard Books.

Smith, L. (2008). *Madam President*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

Smith, L. (2012). *Abe Lincoln's dream*. New York: Roaring Book Press.

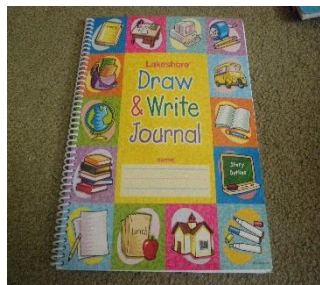
## Appendix J

## Picturebook Codes

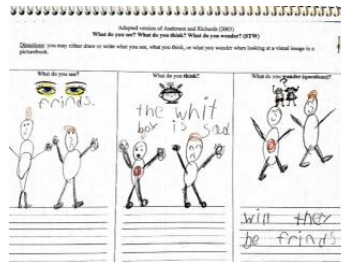
Picturebook Code	Definition
1. Body Language	Nonverbal communication using one's body to convey emotion (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006).
2. Facial Expressions	A form of body language that communicates nonverbally using one's face to convey emotion (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006).
3. Color	Used to convey emotion, and it can also affect the mood or emotional impact of an image (Serafini, 2014).
4. Composition	The arrangement of details in the picture. Composition also relates to how close or far away a character(s) is from the reader (Serafini, 2014).

Appendix K

Students' response to the visual using STW and NM charts in their knowledge notebooks



Students' response to the visual using adapted STW chart-*Yo! Yes?*



Students' response to the visual using adapted NM chart-*Mr. George Baker*



Students' response to the visual using adapted NM chart-*Madam President* and *Abe Lincoln's*

*Dream*

Adapted Savater's Noticing-Meaning (NM)  
 Directions: Pick one picturebook code from "Madam President." Then, choose one of your favorite illustrations. Make sure to include the picturebook code that you have chosen in your drawing. Write one sentence about what you noticed in the illustration, and one sentence about what it might mean.

Circle the picturebook code you see in the image. Body Language. Composition (describe what character is to you)

What do you notice?  
 I see a girl, a pet, a potato.

What does it mean?  
 Little girls toys.

Adapted Savater's Noticing-Meaning (NM)  
 Directions: Pick one picturebook code from "Madam President." Then, choose one of your favorite illustrations. Make sure to include the picturebook code that you have chosen in your drawing. Write one sentence about what you noticed in the illustration, and one sentence about what it might mean.

Circle the picturebook code you see in the image. Body Language. Composition (describe what character is to you)

What do you notice?  
 she is laughing.

What does it mean?  
 she is smiling.

Adapted Savater's Noticing-Meaning (NM)  
 Directions: Pick one picturebook code from "Abe Lincoln's Dream." Then, choose one of your favorite illustrations. Make sure to include the picturebook code that you have chosen in your drawing. Write one sentence about what you noticed in the illustration, and one sentence about what it might mean.

Circle the picturebook code you see in the image. Body Language. Composition (describe what character is to you)

What do you notice?  
 The moon and fgs.

What does it mean?  
 she is chawing the moon.

Adapted Savater's Noticing-Meaning (NM)  
 Directions: Pick one picturebook code from "Abe Lincoln's Dream." Then, choose one of your favorite illustrations. Make sure to include the picturebook code that you have chosen in your drawing. Write one sentence about what you noticed in the illustration, and one sentence about what it might mean.

Circle the picturebook code you see in the image. Body Language. Composition (describe what character is to you)

What do you notice?  
 Abraham Lincoln is sad.

What does it mean?  
 The girl did not like that he was a girl.