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Course: BA Illustration
Module: Research in context, ADAD5003
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Word count: 2,274

Question 1: Choose 3 picture books you consider to be postmodern, examine what defines them as such.

How can you define a picture book as postmodern? Within this essay the concept of postmodernism in picture books is going to be examined and thoroughly explored. By breaking down what Fundamental element and key aspects it takes to make up a picture book. As well as researching into their importance to a child's learning and development. To complete a thorough examination of post modernism as a whole, and the characteristics that define it by exploring three examples of postmodern books in children's literature and breaking down the defining elements within the text and images to determine whether these picture books can actually be defined as post Modern and see how they compare against one another. For this to be possible, the essay will also explore three specifically chosen children's story books, these being 'Wave' by Suzy Lee, 'Black and white' by David Macauley and 'The day the crayons came home' by Drew Daywalt.

In order to be able to correctly examine the three examples shown here, an understanding of postmodernism must be established first.

To do this, it is important to first look at the concept of postmodernism as a whole subject, before then looking at how it appears in picture books. According to Goldstone, it is defined by 'Theoretical and fundamental changes in attitudes, styles, and academic disciplines.' (Goldstone, 2002)

To support this, in the book 'postmodernism' which describes it as "Modernism's unruly child" going on to say that it is "characterised variously as 'an incredulity toward metanarratives', 'a crisis of culture and authority' and 'the shift from production to reproduction' (Heartney , 2004 Pg. 6) This is very prevalent when looking at postmodernism in picture books.

As Postmodernism in picture books is often defined by its non-traditional way of expressing a narrative, creating a unique for of storytelling. Usually constructed of these key characteristics Non-linear plot and varied design layouts, intertextual references, indeterminacy, and metafiction. As well as breaking the fourth wall, multiple narrators, and typographic experimentation. Although, the picturebook may not contain every single characteristic that had been listed here. (Goldstone, 2002)

Similarly, to the importance of understanding of postmodernism, it's just as important to understand the makings of a picture book and why they're prevalent to the development in education of younger children. A picturebook usually heavily relies on both text and visual images to address certain themes within its chosen narrative to young children. Although, some picture books like an example within this essay, are wordless and rely solely on the visual imagery to tell its narrative.

Picture books are an important aspect of a child's learning and development, referenced in 'Looking at picture books' "picture books enrich children's understanding of language, pictures, and how the two work together." (Stewig, 1995), They're used in a child's education from infancy, and frequently appear within they're learning and development years "they form a major part of classroom, school and public libraries" (Stewig, 1995).

“Children draw on a system of codes created by the presentation of visual images on the screen and their prior knowledge.” (Gamble & Yates, 2008 P. 133) although this focuses on how children learn via tv shows and movies, the same can also be stated for how they learn with picture books. Learning to pick up and perceive sequences shown visually in the illustrations shown within the picture books.

Although, picture books are primarily aimed at and marked towards children to learn from. This is no longer the case, many picture books nowhere days are spread over a wide range of age groupings. (Michaels & Walsh, 1990). To support this, writing about 'dual audience' giving the example that children have a "less practiced but perceptive eye." While their adult counterparts are more "practiced at decoding text in a traditional manner." (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006 P. 21)

It's also important to understand the construction of a picturebook, as every aspect of such is important to the delivery of the narrative. For example, the cover of the book can be far more than just a method of marketing, and most cases is a contributing aspect to the narrative. Mentioned by Nikolajeva and Scott (2006),

“The cover of a picture book is often an integral part of the narrative, especially when the cover does not repeat any of the pictures inside the book. The narrative can indeed start on the cover, and it can go beyond the last page onto the back cover” (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006, p.241).

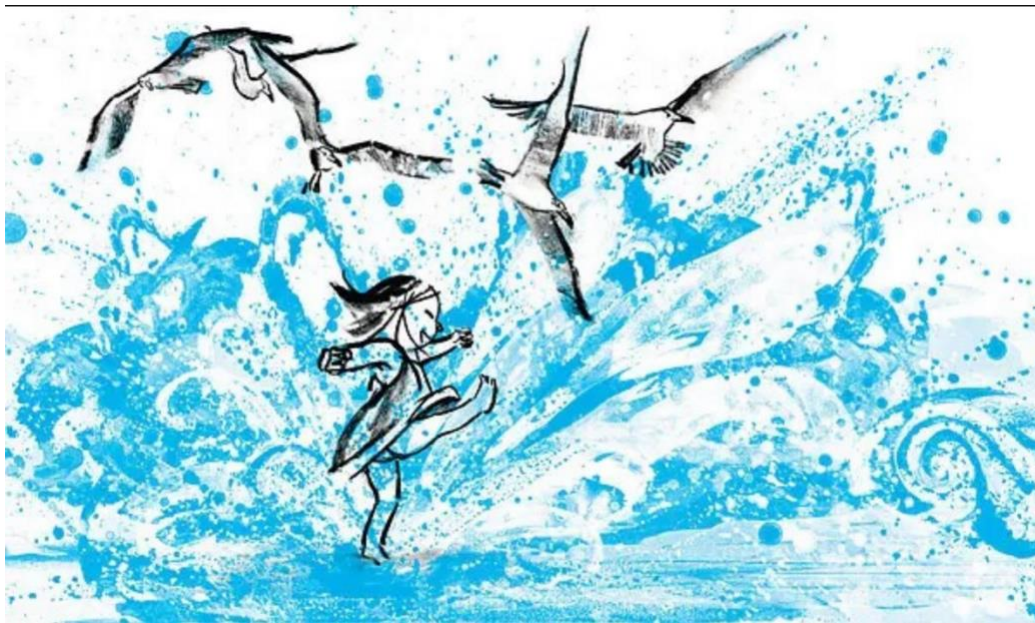


Figure 1. Lee (2008) 'Wave.'

“Wave’ by Suzy Lee is a wordless picture book, which features a little girl at the beach accompanied by her mother and several seagulls. The story is described by the illustrator as “A joyful story that begins and ends with a wave.” (Lee, 2008). The wordlessness of the narrative is what inherently classes the picture book as postmodern, “Readers must ‘read’ the pictures” (Michaels & Walsh, 1990) which means the reader to create their own version of the narrative to explain the events of the book, which may match other individuals' perception of the given narrative. However, it may not match, giving you a differing opinion on the story to how the other person has perceived the text. (Michaels & Walsh, 1990)

“Wordless books offer children open spaces for sense-making, spaces full of possibility in which their emerging comprehending capacities can develop.” (Lysaker, 2018)

For instance, the primary focus of the narrative focuses on how the little girl is interacting with the ocean waves and it appears to the reader that the wave is directly reacting back to her. As an example of this, as seen in figure 1, at one point in the story after the little girl splashes in the water in retaliation of being “chased by the waves” the water pulls back creating a bigger wave. That goes off the page, only to come crashing down after she pokes out her tongue at it. Another aspect of this narrative is shown in how the seagulls copy the little girl’s actions, after intently watching how she plays with the wave.

As the book is wordless, it heavily relies on the illustrations and layout to tell the narrative. For majority of this book, the illustrator uses “a masterful use of line and colour” (Lee, 2008) to her advantage. This is clear in the amount of white space that takes up the majority of this book, the only colour on the page being the blues of the waves and black for characters and very simple background. Keeping the main focus of the narrative easy to not lose. However, towards the end of the book, after the wave comes crashing down on the little girl, there’s suddenly colour in the background, the sky and sand no longer being white, but now having changed to blue and a light wash of sand yellow. The narrative eventually ends with the mother and daughter leaving the beach, the little girl waving a goodbye to the wave. Proving that the book begins and ends with a wave.

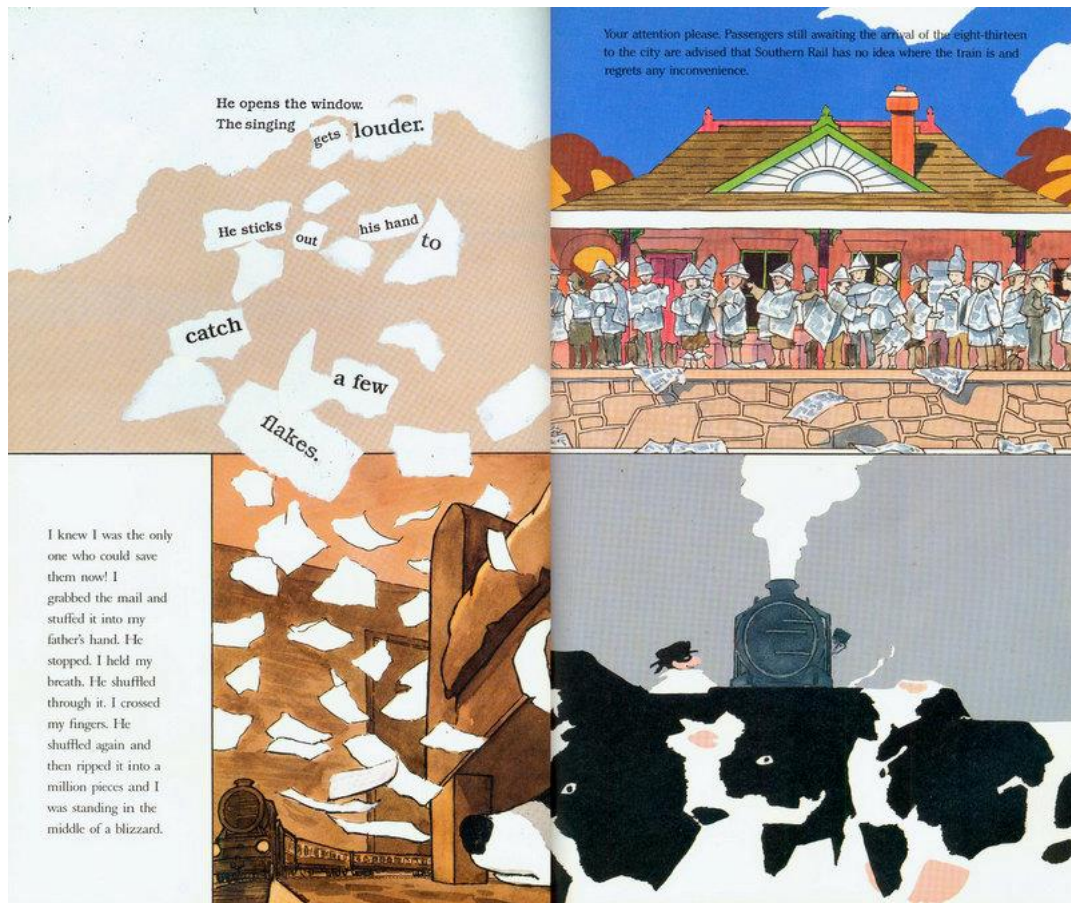


Figure 2. Macaulay (1990) 'Black and white.'

In contrast to the simplified and wordless nature of 'wave'. The picture book 'Black and white' by David Macaulay, almost overwhelms the reader with the chaos of four seemingly unrelated narratives all on the same pages. However, in a similar fashion to 'Wave', Macaulay's narrative forces the reader to decide how to properly piece each narrative together. This is evident on the very first page of the book, which warns the reader despite the narratives appearance to contain 'a number of stories' the reader shouldn't be too comfortable with that explanations and may pay extra attention to the narrative as it "may only contain one story" which will be revealed

with a “careful inspection of both words and pictures is recommended.” (Macaulay, 2010)

Upon first glance, the four narratives are unrelated. Each focusing on a different narrator. ‘Seeing thing’ tells the story of a boy taking his first solo train journey on his way to his parents, when the train comes to a stop because they have come to a blockage. While ‘A waiting game’ follows people waiting for a train as they begin to descend into pure chaos, the majority of that story is wordless apart from the occasional announcement. ‘Parent problems’ follows the point of view of a girl and a boy, whose parents come back from work acting very strange, and ‘Udder chaos’ follows a herd of Holstein cows leaving a field and being incredibly difficult to find, an unwelcome individual dressed in black and white joining them on their pursuit.

The narratives themselves are not the only thing that separates each story from one another. ‘The typeface as well as the illustration’ for each narrative, force the readers views into the individualism of each story. (Stewig, 1995 p.175) ‘Seeing things’ was created using loosely applied watercolour, ‘utter chaos’ is simplified, containing big shapes and no line art in an abstract fashion. (Stewig, 1995 p.175). Meanwhile, ‘Problem parents’ and ‘a waiting game’ are illustrated in a similar style, although there are a few key differences. While “a waiting game” is has a broader colour pallet, ‘Problem parents’ is fairly monotone, only using black, white and various browns. (Stewig, 1995 p.175), these two also use line. But there’s a distinct difference between how the two incorporate it into the illustrations. ‘Problem parents’ lines appear to be cleaner with a “determinedly constraining pen line” while the line

work in 'a waiting game' is less "determined" and but still clean as described by Stewig.

As the book progresses or whilst taking a second look, it becomes increasingly clear to the reader that certain sections begin to overlap. Similarities and connections arising, plots relating to each other beginning to slot together, Pieces of the sections falling into other parts like a jigsaw puzzle. This is clearly shown in figure 2. Where flakes from 'seeing things breaks of its section on the top left, falling into and perfectly merging into the scene on the bottom.

Out of the three books chosen for this essay, this book certainly shares the most post-modern characteristics. For example, the book contains multiple narrators as already discussed as well as a Non-linear plot line, a non-traditional design and layout.



Fig. 3 Daywalt and Jeffers (2015) 'the day the crayons came home'.

Much like 'black and white' The final book from the three examples also has multiple narrators. However, this book follows a far more linear story line, 'The Day the crayons came home' By Drew Daywalt, offers a unique point of view from lost and misplaced objects, which are, in this case Duncan's crayons. The reader takes the place of Duncan for the majority of the picture book, reading all of the postcards sent to him by the missing crayons. This is the most obvious example of postmodernism in this book, as this breaks the fourth wall and the characters are directly talking to you, the reader.

The picture book incorporates both real images and illustrations in its visual imagery, to tell its story. The pages aren't overwhelming to the reader. Main body of text located on the left page, contained within the postcard. There is very little other text. However, the other text is written in 3rd person. Explaining what Duncan is doing and what he then goes on to do for the crayons.

There is far less mental working out throughout this book, when compared to 'wave' and 'black and white' it is evident that to read the narrative there is little to no need to work out the order of the plot or context of the scenes as it follows a linear plot, which is refreshing. Nevertheless, this does not mean that 'the day the crayons came home' isn't postmodern. The most prevalent and obvious form of post modernism within this is as previously mentioned the multiple narrators as well as the non-traditional design and layout.

However, you can also find postmodernism within the playfulness of the text.

There are two distinct typefaces in this story, which briefly have been touched on previously, the 3rd person point of view is typed in a traditional text face which is easy and clear for the reader to read clearly, while the main body of dialogues text face is written in crayon. All apart from one on spread 12 which has been written in pencil as the crayon in that page is stuck in a pencil sharpener, As shown in figure 3.

In conclusion after breaking down postmodernism to its key concepts and ideas, as well as researching the definition of picture books, to have a greater understanding of the fundamentals of the structure needed to classify a book as a picture book, through researching what they're made of. Other less significant discoveries were also made during the research and development for this text, such as the importance of wordless narratives and the development of children perception. And how they play a key role in children's learning and development. Before then examining, the three picture books. It is evident that the three picture books are all use clear examples of postmodernism. However, despite the similarities they seem to share. There are also obvious differences between the postmodern characteristics for each picture book, some such as David Macaulay's 'Black and White' showing far more postmodern qualities when directly compared to Suzy lee's wave and Drew Daywelts 'The day the crayons came home.' Therefore, making it the strongest example within this text, while 'Wave' by Suzy lee appears to be the weakest. Even though, both picture books force the reader to decide how to correctly "read" the narrative.

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