

The Postmodern Picture Book

Synthesizing the work of several theorists, including Anstey, Sipe and Pantaleo, authors and illustrators of postmodern picture books make use of the following devices:

- Self-referentiality, which refuses to allow readers to have a vicarious lived-through experience, offering instead a metafictive stance by drawing attention to the text *as a text*, rather than a secondary world (subversion of literary traditions and conventions and undermining the traditional distinction between the story and the outside 'real' world).
- obtrusive narrators.
- multiple narrators.
- Unusual uses of the narrator's voice to position the reader to read the book in particular ways and through a particular characters' eyes (this can be achieved by the written or visual text).
- multiple or multistranded narratives,
- narrative framing devices (stories within stories)
- non-linear and non-sequential plots,
- indeterminacy
- intertextuality, which requires the reader to use background knowledge in order to access the available meanings.
- using a variety of illustrative styles, A pastiche of illustrative styles, which require the reader to employ a range of knowledge and grammars to read.
- nontraditional design and layout, New and unusual design and layout, which challenge the reader's perception of how to read a book.
- typographic experimentation,
- description of the creative process, mixing of genres, and parody.
- Nontraditional ways of using plot, character and setting that challenge reader expectations and require different ways of reading and viewing.
- The availability of multiple readings and meanings for a variety of audiences. Multiplicity of meanings (multivalent), so that there are multiple pathways through the narrative, a high degree of ambiguity, and nonresolution or open-ended endings.
- Playfulness, in which readers are invited to treat the text as a semiotic playground.
- Contesting discourses (between illustrative and written text), which require the reader to consider alternate readings and meaning.

ALSO: See other handout – 'Useful Terms'.

READING

Colker, J. (2009) *The Postmodern World of Children's Book Illustration* (on Moodle).

Bacchilega, C. (1997) *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Joosen, V. (2011) *Critical and Creative Perspectives on Fairy Tales: An Intertextual Dialogue between Fairy-Tale Scholarship and Postmodern Retellings*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

McCallum, R. (2002) 'Would I Lie to you?: Metalepsis and Modal Distruption in Some "True" Fairy Tales' in Sipe, L. R. and Panatelo, S. (eds.) *Postmodern Picturebooks: Play, Parody and Self-Referentiality*. Abingdon: Routledge: 180 - 192

Nikolajeva, M. and Scott, C. (2006) *How Picturebooks Work*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Sipe, L. R. and Panatelo, S. (eds.)(2008) *Postmodern Picturebooks: Play, Parody and Self-Referentiality*. Abingdon: Routledge. p.3