

Exploring the Value of Picturebooks: Enhancing Literacy Development and Content Exploration through a Three-Lens Approach

Explorar el valor dels àlbums il·lustrats: potenciar el desenvolupament de la literacitat i l'exploració de continguts mitjançant un enfocament triple

Explorar el valor de los álbumes ilustrados: potenciar el desarrollo de la alfabetización y la exploración de contenidos mediante un enfoque triple.

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Abstract

This article presents an innovative three-lens approach to utilizing picturebooks, emphasizing their role beyond early learning tools to dynamic resources for a comprehensive education. This approach, comprising content-area, readerly, and writerly lenses, allows educators to fully leverage picturebooks to enhance content exploration, develop reading skills, and foster writing proficiency across various age groups and disciplines. Drawing on various scholarly perspectives and practical classroom applications, including using *Ada's Violin* as an example, the authors illustrate how picturebooks can deepen students' understanding of complex subjects, bolster foundational reading skills, and inspire creative writing. The article also provides guidance on selecting high-quality picturebooks that align with curriculum standards and resonate culturally and emotionally with students. Educators can create a more engaging, inclusive, and effective learning environment by tapping into the educational wealth of picturebooks and integrating these lenses.

Keywords: picturebooks, mentor texts, content-area literacy, pedagogical strategies, reading and writing development

Resumen

Este artículo presenta un innovador enfoque de tres perspectivas para el uso de los álbumes ilustrados, destacando su papel más allá de ser herramientas de aprendizaje temprano para convertirse en recursos dinámicos para una educación integral. Este enfoque, que incluye las perspectivas de contenido, lectora y escritora, permite a las personas educadoras aprovechar plenamente los álbumes ilustrados para potenciar la exploración de contenidos, desarrollar habilidades de lectura y fomentar la competencia en escritura a través de diferentes grupos de edad y disciplinas. Basándose en diversas perspectivas académicas y aplicaciones prácticas en el aula, incluido el uso de *El violín de Ada* como ejemplo, los autores ilustran cómo los álbumes ilustrados pueden profundizar la comprensión de temas complejos, reforzar las habilidades fundamentales de lectura e inspirar la escritura creativa. El artículo también ofrece orientación para seleccionar álbumes ilustrados de calidad que se alineen con los estándares curriculares y conecten cultural y emocionalmente con los estudiantes. Al aprovechar la riqueza educativa de los álbumes ilustrados e integrar estas perspectivas, los educadores pueden crear un entorno de aprendizaje más atractivo, inclusivo y efectivo.

Palabras clave: álbumes ilustrados, textos modelo, alfabetización en áreas de contenido, estrategias pedagógicas, desarrollo de la lectura y la escritura.

Resum

Aquest article presenta un innovador enfocament des d'un triple acostament a l'ús dels àlbums il·lustrats, destacant el seu paper més enllà de ser eines d'aprenentatge primerenc per convertir-se en recursos dinàmics per a una educació integral. Aquest enfocament, que inclou les perspectives de contingut, lectora i escriptora, permet a les persones educadores aprofitar plenament els àlbums il·lustrats per potenciar l'exploració de continguts, desenvolupar habilitats de lectura i fomentar la competència en escriptura a través de diferents grups d'edat i disciplines. Basant-se en diverses perspectives acadèmiques i aplicacions pràctiques a l'aula, incloent-hi l'ús de *El violí d'Ada* (*Ada's violin*) com a exemple, els autors il·lustren com els àlbums il·lustrats poden aprofundir en la comprensió d'assumptes complexos, reforçar les habilitats fonamentals de lectura i inspirar l'escriptura creativa. L'article també ofereix orientació per seleccionar àlbums il·lustrats de qualitat que s'alineen amb els estàndards curriculars i que connecten culturalment i emocionalment amb els estudiants. Mitjançant l'aprofitament de la riquesa educativa dels àlbums il·lustrats i la integració d'aquestes perspectives, els educadors poden crear un entorn d'aprenentatge més atractiu, inclusiu i efectiu.

Paraules clau: àlbums il·lustrats, textos model, literacitat en àrees de contingut, estratègies pedagògiques, desenvolupament de la lectura i l'escriptura.

1. Introduction

Picturebooks, often seen as simple tools for early literacy, have far-reaching potential that extends well beyond their traditional use (Bintz & Parker, 2024). Drawing from the collaborative teaching experiences of Authors 1 and 3, this article highlights the multifaceted nature of picturebooks and their transformative impact on teaching and learning across various age groups and disciplines. Our journey began at a Professional Development School (PDS) site, where the convergence of content-rich read-alouds by Author 3 and insightful reflections by Author 1 resulted in a realization: picturebooks are not only valuable for what they offer to readers and writers, but they are also tremendous resources for teaching content knowledge and sparking deeper curiosity about content-related concepts.

These initial observations and reflections led to a more structured exploration as we delved into professional learning workshops that intertwined picturebooks with economics standards, a venture supported by the College of Business's Center for Economics Education and Financial Literacy. This intersection of economics and literacy education illuminated picturebooks' versatile role in aligning with content-area curriculum standards while also enriching the literacy learning experience.

Drawing inspiration from these experiences, the authors advocate for a comprehensive approach to the use of picturebooks in educational settings. Why settle for a mere surface-level engagement with these texts when there is so much more to extract? With this perspective in mind, the authors embarked on a mission to "milk picturebooks for all they are worth," ensuring that each reading experience is as enriching and cross-curricular as possible. In other words, when we consider a picturebook read-aloud experience, we ask ourselves the following three questions to ensure that we are getting the most possible value out of the text: What can we do as readers with this book? What can we do as writers with this book? And what content can we explore further with this book?

This article presents a literature review and subsequent sections that build on this philosophy. We explore the expansive roles of picturebooks in enhancing literacy skills, focusing on three core areas: reading skills development, writing instruction, and content-area literacy. Through this lens, picturebooks are not just read but thoroughly explored and meticulously examined for their rich educational value.

This approach maximizes the educational value of these texts and transforms the way educators and students perceive and engage with picturebooks. By adopting this comprehensive approach, we aim to create a more dynamic and cross-curricular learning environment where the true potential of picturebooks is fully realized, benefiting learners of all ages

2. Defining Picturebooks and their Value

Picturebooks are a form of children’s literature that uniquely combines visual and verbal narratives to tell a story or convey a concept (Bajour, 2010; da Silva & Sastre, 2017; van der Linden, 2006). To classify as a picturebook, the narrative and the illustrations combine to form the story, and “the story would be diminished or confusing without the illustrations” (Short et al., 2014, p. 50). The rich interplay of text and imagery makes picturebooks essential in fostering multiliteracies, including visual literacy (Kesler et al., 2023; Papen, 2020). Because of their rich visual and verbal narratives, educators often use them to design robust literacy experiences for children that extend beyond the story itself. Picturebooks captivate young minds with their vibrant illustrations while serving as a gateway to early language development and fostering a love for reading and storytelling (Honaker & Miller, 2024; Jalongo, 2004; Van der Linden, 2006). They play a crucial role in enhancing children’s cognitive and emotional understanding, which makes them an invaluable resource across content areas and classroom settings (Moreillon, 2017; da Silva & Sastre, 2017).

While traditionally reserved for use in the early childhood English language arts (ELA) classroom, picturebooks offer benefits that go well beyond the elementary ELA classroom setting (Kalaitzi, 2024). This literature review delves into the picturebooks’ invaluable role in fostering comprehensive literacy and content area skills across grade levels. Moving beyond their perceived function as introductory reading tools for young learners, these vibrant and narrative-rich resources can profoundly impact areas crucial for academic and personal growth (Axelrod et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2023). The exploration here spans three vital domains where picturebooks can enhance instruction and student achievement: reading skills, writing development, and content-area literacy competency. Each domain is investigated through a synthesis of scholarly perspectives, revealing the depth and breadth of the impact picturebooks can have on teaching and learning.

2.1. Picturebooks Support the Development of Reading Skills

Picturebooks offer enriching literacy experiences and can play a key role in the development of reading strategies and skills (Moreillon, 2017). In addition to using picturebooks to promote an overall love of books and reading, educators can use picturebooks to model reading comprehension strategies, such as making connections and asking questions (Moreillon, 2017). The diverse vocabulary and distinctive linguistic structures found in picturebooks can be especially enriching for young learners (Jalongo, 2004) and multilingual learners (Vehabovic, 2021). Logan et al. (2019) found that reading just one picturebook a day exposes children to 78,000 words per year. Moreover, picturebooks can also introduce children to linguistic expressions and cultural nuances they might not encounter in everyday conversation (Mourão, 2021). The resulting conversations and discussions around these new words,

connections, and questions can lead to readers making meaningful connections between the text and the world around them; thus, picturebooks can act as springboards for critical thinking, problem-solving, and taking action (Dollins, 2020; Djavairovna, 2023; Martens et al., 2018; Moreillon, 2017).

Montag et al. (2015) highlight the substantial linguistic diversity and clever wordplay found in picturebooks, emphasizing their critical role in developing children's vocabulary. This exposure to a wide array of words and phrases is instrumental in vocabulary building and lays the groundwork for more advanced linguistic proficiency, cognitive flexibility, and creativity. Expanding on this, Dowdall et al. (2020) delve into the dynamics of shared picturebook reading, revealing its substantial impact on expressive and receptive language skills in young learners. This interactive reading process, enriched through discussion and conversation, cultivates vital language and social-emotional skills, enhancing a child's ability to articulate thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Bajour, 2010).

Moreover, Niland (2023) explores the unique capability of picturebooks to cultivate positive reading identities and stimulate the imagination of young readers. Through their compelling narratives and vibrant illustrations, picturebooks serve as both windows and mirrors, offering children views into lives and experiences different from their own and reflecting their own experiences and identities (Bishop, 1990; Heineke et al., 2022). This dual role enriches their understanding of the world and fosters empathy as they see themselves in the stories and understand others' perspectives. By engaging children's attention and inspiring them to envision and explore worlds beyond their immediate experiences, picturebooks nurture a sense of wonder and curiosity, which is essential for developing a lifelong love for reading and learning.

Collectively, these studies present a compelling case for the integral role of picturebooks in the holistic development of reading skills. They underscore that picturebooks do more than teach children how to read; they ignite a passion for reading, enhance comprehension skills, and lay a solid foundation for a lifetime of developing and expanding literacy. By weaving together language development, emotional connection, and imaginative exploration, picturebooks are shown to give children pleasurable and enjoyable reading experiences while also building critical thinking and foundational literacy skills (Moreillon, 2017).

2.2. Picturebooks Promote Writing Development

In writing instruction, using picture books as mentor texts is pivotal in refining and enriching students' writing capabilities (Cappelli, 2023). Fletcher (2011) and Ray (1999) have articulated the profound impact that mentor texts can have on student writing, especially when we teach students how to read like writers (Smith, 1983). This methodology encourages students to engage with various texts actively, noticing the intentional choices authors make when they write, thinking about the impact those

choices have on the reader, and emulating those techniques in their own writing. Reading texts with a writerly lens nurtures students' writing skills by sharpening their eyes to notice the use of impactful writing craft moves (Shubitz, 2016), theorize why writers make those moves, name the specific moves they notice, and add the moves to their repertoire of techniques for written expression (Marchetti & O'Dell, 2021). In essence, students can be taught to approach picturebooks with a writerly lens, holding the question, "What can I learn from this that I might try in my writing?" in their minds (Ray & Cleveland, 2004, p. 88). Since picture books provide children with rare and complex language that they are not as likely to encounter in everyday conversations (Montag, 2019), they offer a golden opportunity for students to discover and explore unique writing structures and crafts (Ramos & Navas, 2022).

With their rich narrative and artistic diversity, picturebooks are potent tools for enhancing writing proficiency across different age groups and academic levels. Since picturebooks are frequently read aloud and enjoyed in elementary classrooms, they play an integral part of the elementary child's literacy experiences (Villareal et al., 2015); thus, picturebooks serve as ideal mentor texts because of their familiar format. Further, picturebooks masterfully pair written and visual elements, and since drawing plays an important role in the young child's writing process, the illustrations in picturebooks provide inspiration for young writers as they navigate the art of composing with both words and pictures (Villareal et al., 2015). Premont et al. (2017) extend this concept further by demonstrating the applicability and effectiveness of picturebooks as mentor texts for secondary students, a demographic often overlooked in this context. The findings of Premont et al. reveal notable improvements in sophisticated writing elements such as word choice and sentence fluency. By serving as models of effective writing, picturebooks help students imagine what is possible with their writing by showcasing writing crafts and structures that students can analyze, emulate, and internalize to augment their writing skills.

2.3. Picturebooks Aid Content-Area Literacy

Content-area literacy is a cornerstone of educational development, and the utilization of picturebooks in this domain offers a unique approach to enhancing student learning. The concept of "way-in" books, as expounded by Bintz (2011), underscores the potential of picturebooks to serve as accessible entry points into complex subject matter. These books can simplify sophisticated concepts without diluting their essence, effectively scaffolding student comprehension and sparking student interest and curiosity (Martínez-Carratalá, 2022; Ramos & Navas, 2022).

Zhang et al. (2023) provide compelling evidence for the utility of picturebooks in demystifying mathematics. By using picturebooks to translate abstract mathematical concepts into concrete,

understandable narratives, their research points to a significant improvement in students' mathematical understanding and performance. Zhang and colleagues used the picturebook "Are We There Yet, Daddy?" (Walters, 2002) to introduce linear functions and engage students in solving a mathematical problem integrated within the narrative. Presenting math through storytelling and visualization aids in comprehension and promotes a more positive attitude toward what is often considered a challenging subject. Moreover, the work of Axelrod et al. (2020) demonstrates the adaptability of picturebooks in tackling contemporary and complex issues such as climate change. Picturebooks can offer young learners a nuanced understanding of such global challenges by presenting these topics through relatable stories and illustrations. This approach also helps nurture empathetic and informed perspectives among students regarding pressing global issues (Axelrod et al., 2020).

Informational or nonfiction picturebooks can also be paired with primary sources, news articles, and other artifacts to enhance the learning experience. Goga and colleagues (2021) highlight that nonfiction picturebooks have long existed alongside fiction picturebooks but have not received as much scholarly attention. They emphasize the importance of recognizing and studying the verbal and visual strategies unique to nonfiction picturebooks, which can be instrumental in presenting factual content in an engaging and educational manner. In addition, nonfiction picturebooks facilitate the construction and validation of knowledge, making complex subjects accessible and intriguing for readers. Integrating nonfiction picturebooks with primary sources and contemporary articles can create a richer, more immersive learning environment that fosters critical thinking and a deeper understanding of the material (Moreillon, 2017; Ramos & Navas, 2022; Shimek, 2019).

Picturebooks are not mere tools for initial engagement but powerful instruments for deepening knowledge, sparking intellectual curiosity, and enhancing content-specific literacy. By integrating diverse subjects into engaging narratives and visuals, picturebooks often cater to various learning styles, making content-area literacy accessible and enjoyable for students. This integrative approach supports content area literacy and learning and cultivates a culture of inquiry and critical thinking among young learners (Axelrod et al., 2020; Bintz, 2011; Zhang et al., 2023).

Clearly, picturebooks play a dynamic and integral role in the landscape of literacy education. More than simple tools for early learning, picturebooks are pivotal gateways that enrich content exploration, reading skill development, and writing instruction. The versatility of picturebooks, as highlighted in the literature, signals a new possibility for how educators can harness their potential. In the sections that follow, we explore the implementation of a three-lens approach—readerly, writerly, and content-area—to leverage the capabilities of picturebooks in literacy education fully. This innovative approach,

grounded in the insights gained from the literature, offers a promising pathway to elevate literacy and content education. It suggests a more engaging, inclusive, and effective strategy that has the potential to unlock new possibilities in teaching and learning with picturebooks in a way that develops well-rounded, literate individuals equipped to navigate and contribute to an increasingly complex world.

3. Maximizing Picturebooks: A Three-Lens Approach

In the realm of literacy education, picturebooks offer a multifaceted opportunity to enrich learning experiences. This approach delineated into three distinct lenses—readerly, writerly, and content-area—enables educators to harness the full pedagogical potential of picturebooks. These lenses allow for the enhancement of reading skills, development of writing proficiency, and a deep exploration of content, making picturebooks not just tools for reading but powerful instruments for cross-curricular instruction. Integrating picturebooks into literacy education can align with curriculum standards in various educational contexts, such as the Georgia Standards of Excellence¹ (GSE) in the United States, and cater to students' diverse learning styles and needs, making learning more engaging and effective. Educators can adopt this approach to create a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment where students can connect with and benefit from picturebooks' rich, layered experiences.

3.1. Readerly Lens: Enhancing Foundational Skills

Through the readerly lens, picturebooks become tools for developing essential literacy skills. This lens emphasizes the development of reading accuracy, fluency, vocabulary, and other key skills and strategies. With their engaging visuals and narratives, picturebooks also enhance comprehension skills and the ability to connect texts and personal experiences. Furthermore, the intrinsic appeal of picturebooks can significantly boost motivation and engagement, drawing students into the joys of reading and fostering a lifelong love for literature. This lens acknowledges the unique power of picturebooks to captivate and inspire young readers, making them an essential component of literacy instruction.

3.2. Writerly Lens: Learning About Writing Through Mentor Texts

The writerly lens positions picturebooks as mentor texts that inspire and guide students as writers. This perspective underscores the importance of exposing students to varied text structures, writing crafts, and visual features present in picturebooks (Honaker & Miller, 2024). By analyzing these texts,

¹ The Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) are a set of educational standards established by the state of Georgia in the United States. Similar to standards established by other U.S. states, they define the knowledge and skills that K–12 students should acquire in various subjects, including English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, to ensure they are prepared for college and careers. The GSE are designed to be rigorous, promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication skills.

students gain insights into the mechanics of writing and storytelling. This lens aids in the cultivation of writing identities, encouraging students to explore their creative expressions. Using picturebooks as models for writing instruction demonstrates effective writing techniques and ignites the imaginative potential within each student, allowing them to see themselves as authors and creators of their own stories (Culham, 2023).

3.3. Content-Area Lens: Exploring Content and Connecting with Standards

The content-area lens focuses on integrating picturebooks with content-area standards, such as the GSE. This involves selecting books that complement the curriculum in an effort to deepen students' understanding of specific subjects. For example, a picturebook depicting historical events can serve as a springboard for discussions on history, fostering a deeper comprehension of the subject matter. This lens encourages educators to identify connections across various content areas. Additionally, this approach aids in building background knowledge and expanding vocabulary, leveraging the rich learning opportunities that can be found in picturebooks.

4. Ada's Violin: Implementing the Three Lenses in a Lesson

The book *Ada's Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay* by Susan Hood, illustrated by Sally Wern Comport (2016), incorporates vivid illustrations and an engaging narrative to share the inspiring story of Ada Rios and the formation of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay. This picturebook offers a valuable example of how to apply the three-lens approach to develop reading and writing skills and enhance content-area learning.

4.1. Readerly Lens: Engaging with the Story

As readers, *Ada's Violin* invites students to analyze story elements such as character development, setting, and plot structure. It introduces new vocabulary and social issues, prompting discussions about community challenges and the transformative power of music. During a recent presentation at a conference focused on children's and middle grades literature, the authors asked what reading skills participants thought they could teach using the book. Participants responded with concepts such as perspective/point of view, vivid language, vocabulary, theme, character motivation and struggles, illustrations to convey deeper meaning, setting, etc. More than even these skills, educators can guide students to empathize with Ada's emotions and aspirations, prompting reflection on how one's circumstances can shape personal growth and societal contributions. The back matter of the book, including the author's note and additional information, provides a springboard for further exploration and critical thinking about the book's themes and real-world implications.

4.2. Writerly Lens: Lessons in Writing Craft

Ada's Violin is a tale of hope and a masterclass in writing techniques. It employs onomatopoeia, rich descriptive language, and various text features such as quotation marks, parentheses, and ellipses to convey Ada's thoughts and feelings. During the same presentation described above, the authors asked participants what writing crafts they could teach using the book, and they noted alliteration and onomatopoeia, vivid language, complex writing structures, the interplay between the text and the illustrations, word choice, and sentence structure, among others.

Additionally, while the story is primarily told in English, there are Spanish words included within the narrative throughout. These Spanish words are written using distinct typographic choices to set them apart from the English text, offering teachers a unique opportunity to discuss the importance of language and cultural representation in writing. The playful use of language and puns ("fiddling around," "tuned in," "band together") demonstrates the creative potential of wordplay. Additionally, the use of colored boxes to delineate text from illustrations can be discussed in the context of layout and design in storytelling.


4.3. Content-Area Lens: Content Exploration

Utilizing Ada's Violin, educators can delve into the effects of pollution on the environment, aligning with GSE S3L2. The narrative of Ada and her community in Cateura, Paraguay, becomes a catalyst for exploring topics such as pollution, recycling, and the resilience of nature. Presentation participants also added other topics for exploration, such as music, STEM, and art, particularly the creative process of making instruments from recycled materials and the science of sound. Students can engage in inquiry-based learning by asking questions about the environmental impact of waste, evaluating the conditions described in the book, and researching conservation strategies. Additionally, the story offers a personal viewpoint on the value of recycling, as instruments crafted from trash transform into tools for hope and change. Music, as a central theme, serves as an artistic conduit to discuss environmental stewardship and innovation. The importance of advocating for those who do not have the same opportunities is a central theme of the book, and it encourages students to consider the role of creativity and innovation in overcoming challenges.


This case study illustrates how Ada's Violin can be a resonant educational tool, harmonizing content knowledge with literacy skills and creative expression. It demonstrates the effectiveness of the three-lens approach in creating a comprehensive, engaging lesson that resonates with students on multiple levels, from intellectual engagement to emotional connection and creative inspiration.

Table 1 below presents examples of how other picturebooks can be used to implement the three-lens approach. These examples, some of which are written in languages other than English, illustrate the

versatility of picturebooks in addressing various content areas, reading skills, and writing techniques. Using these examples, educators can draw inspiration for integrating similar techniques in their classrooms. The specific picturebooks in Table 1 were chosen because they exemplify the effective implementation of the three-lens approach—readerly, writerly, and content-area lenses—in literacy education. Each book offers unique opportunities to explore various content areas, develop reading skills, and enhance writing techniques for comprehensive, engaging lessons. These picturebooks were also selected based on their ability to address important themes such as environmental awareness, social justice, and biodiversity.

	<p><i>The Water Princess</i> Susan Verde and Georgie Badiel (2016)</p>
<p>Content-Area Lens <i>What content can we explore further with this book?</i></p>	<p>Economic Concepts and Scarcity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the concept of scarcity and its implications, emphasizing that unlimited wants are greater than limited resources. <p>Environmental Awareness and Pollution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain, evaluate, and communicate information about the effects of pollution (air, land, and water) on the environment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions, collect information, and create records of the sources and effects of pollution on plants and animals. • Explore, research, and communicate solutions to protect plants and animals, such as the conservation of resources and recycling of materials. <p>Resource Management and Conservation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the scarcity of essential resources, such as water, and the importance of managing these resources sustainably.
<p>Readerly Lens <i>What can we do as readers with this book?</i></p>	<p>Story Analysis and Inferencing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and analyze key story elements, including characters, setting, and plot. • Develop skills in making inferences based on textual evidence, understanding reasons behind specific events or conditions described in the text. <p>Contextual Understanding (Vocabulary)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use context clues to determine the meaning of unknown words within a text. • Utilize supplementary material, such as back matter with real-life pictures and explanations, to enhance understanding and provide additional context. <p>Cultural Awareness and Alternative Perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore alternative perspectives, such as a child's view on life in different regions, including challenges related to access to clean water. • Engage with literature that provides a "window" into different cultures and regions, offering insight into diverse ways of life. <p>Empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster a sense of empowerment, motivating readers to engage in activities that can bring about change.
<p>Writerly Lens <i>What can we learn about writing through this book?</i></p>	<p>Punctuation and Dialogue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently uses different punctuation marks (hyphens, ellipses, commas) to indicate pauses and enhance the flow of the text. • Incorporates dialogue to add depth and realism to the story. <p>Imagery and Sensory Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize vivid imagery and sensory words to immerse the reader in the story. • Separate pictures and text on certain pages to emphasize their connection and enhance the storytelling experience. <p>Text Formatting and Visual Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses different fonts to highlight specific words and convey emphasis (e.g., clear, cool, <i>maman</i> ("mom" in French)).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrates illustrations to support and enhance the text, creating a visual narrative (e.g., the water shape around “drink” toward the end). <p>Supplementary Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes back matter with information about real-world issues to inform and inspire the reader to make a change.
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	<p><i>Das Ei (The Egg)</i> Britta Teckentrup (2017)</p>
<p>Content-Area Lens <i>What content can we explore further with this book?</i></p>	<p>Life Cycles and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explores the life cycles of various animals, detailing how they begin as eggs and transform into different stages of life (including the unique developmental processes associated with each). <p>Biological Biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showcases diversity of egg-laying species and their habitats, highlighting how different environments influence egg characteristics and survival strategies. <p>Ecology, Scientific Observation, and Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigates the role of eggs in ecosystems, including their importance in food chains and ecological balance. Encourages students to observe and document the stages of egg development and hatching (develops skills in scientific observation and recording). Fosters inquiry-based learning by posing questions and conducting experiments related to eggs and their properties (e.g., strength, permeability).
<p>Readerly Lens <i>What can we do as readers with this book?</i></p>	<p>Critical Thinking and Inference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make inferences about the behaviors and characteristics of different species based on the information provided in the text and illustrations. Encourage readers to think critically about the environmental factors that affect egg development and survival. <p>Engagement with Illustrations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine and interpret the illustrations to gain a deeper understanding of the text. The images support and enhance the information presented, providing visual context for the written content. <p>Connection to Real-World Concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relates the information in the book to real-world biological and ecological concepts, such as species diversity and environmental adaptation. Encourage readers to make connections between the book's content and their own observations or experiences with nature.
<p>Writerly Lens <i>What can we learn about writing through this book?</i></p>	<p>Use of Informational Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informational writing techniques are used to convey factual content in an interesting and accessible manner. The author balances facts with engaging narrative elements to maintain reader interest. <p>Incorporation of Scientific Concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains complex biological processes and ecological relationships in simple, easy-to-understand language. <p>Descriptive Language and Imagery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The descriptive language and vivid imagery create an engaging and informative text. The author describes different species and their eggs, using sensory details to bring the scenes to life.


	<p><i>La Composición (The Composition)</i> Antonio Skarmeta (1998)</p>
<p>Content-Area Lens <i>What content can we explore further with this book?</i></p>	<p>Life Under Dictatorship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a portrayal of daily life under a repressive regime, highlighting the atmosphere of fear and control. <p>Importance of Free Speech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes the significance of freedom of expression and the dangers of censorship. <p>Political Oppression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The story explores how political oppression affects individuals, especially children, and their families.
<p>Readerly Lens <i>What can we do as readers with this book?</i></p>	<p>Character Analysis and Moral Dilemmas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the characters' actions, motivations, and development, particularly in the face of moral dilemmas. Explore the protagonist's internal conflict and the choices he must make, fostering discussions about ethics and personal integrity. <p>Literary Devices and Storytelling Techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and analyze the literary devices used by the author, such as symbolism, foreshadowing, and irony. Discuss how these devices contribute to the depth and complexity of the story, enhancing readers' engagement and understanding.
<p>Writerly Lens <i>What can we learn about writing through this book?</i></p>	<p>Crafting Authentic Characters and Dialogue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author's use of dialogue to reveal character traits, motivations, and relationships, and to advance the plot. <p>Setting and Atmosphere</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the descriptive details that bring the setting to life, creating a vivid backdrop for the characters' experiences. <p>Narrative Structure and Pacing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze the narrative structure, including the use of foreshadowing and suspense to maintain reader interest and build tension. Explore how the pacing of the story influences the reader's engagement and emotional response. <p>Symbolism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the use of symbolism and other literary devices to add layers of meaning to the story, enriching the reader's experience.

Table 1. Other Examples of Implementing a Three-Lens Approach²

5. Selecting Quality Picturebooks

Selecting high-quality picturebooks is critical in effectively implementing the three-lens approach in literacy education. The choice of picturebooks in the classroom is not merely about selecting engaging stories; it involves carefully considering various aspects that contribute to a child's holistic

² Table 1 showcases various ways to apply a three-lens approach to children's literature, focusing on content-area exploration, reader engagement, and writing techniques. *The Water Princess* (Verde & Badiel, 2016) discusses economic scarcity and environmental conservation, *Das Ei* (Teckentrup, 2017) explores life cycles and ecological diversity, and *La Composición* (Skarmeta, 1998) examines life under dictatorship and the importance of free speech.

development and learning experience. This includes analyzing the literary and artistic quality of the books, their relevance to the curriculum and students' lives, and their potential to foster critical thinking and creativity. To aid educators in this selection process, several resources and criteria can be considered:

- **Literary and Presentation Quality:** Choose books noted for their literary quality and excellent presentation. Resources like *The Best Children's Books of the Year* by the Bank Street College of Education list titles chosen for these qualities.
- **Cultural and Emotional Relevance:** Opt for books that resonate emotionally with young readers and represent a diversity of cultural experiences. *Notable Books for a Global Society* by the International Literacy Association is a helpful resource.
- **Subject-Specific Selection:** For integrating content areas like social studies and science, refer to lists like *Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People* and *Outstanding Science Trade Books for Students*, which focus on books that offer credible and diverse perspectives.
- **Ethnic and Racial Representation:** It is important to include books celebrating ethnic and racial diversity. The Pura Belpre Award and the Coretta Scott King Book Awards highlight works that appreciate Latinx and African American cultures, respectively.
- **Age-Appropriate Content:** Ensure that the books are suitable for your students' age or grade level. Many of these resources categorize books based on age appropriateness.

The selection of quality picturebooks should be guided by literary merit, cultural representation, subject relevance, and age-appropriateness. This careful selection process ensures that classroom books are engaging, educational, inclusive, and representative of diverse experiences and perspectives. In this endeavor, educators must consider the intricacies of language, the richness of illustrations, and the depth of the narrative, ensuring that each book can effectively contribute to students' educational and emotional development. Moreover, ensuring that these books entertain and educate is crucial, offering a balanced approach to learning and development.

Books selected for classroom use should align with curricular goals and resonate with the students' realities, fostering a connection beyond the classroom. This connection is vital for cultivating a love for reading and learning. The stories and illustrations should act as windows and mirrors for students, providing glimpses into other cultures and experiences while reflecting on their lives and challenges. This dual role of picturebooks in education is essential for building students' empathy, understanding, and a well-rounded worldview. By adhering to these guidelines, educators can create a rich, diverse, inclusive literary environment, ensuring every student finds a book that speaks to them personally and

academically. This thoughtful selection of picturebooks is more than just an academic exercise; it invests in young learners' cognitive and emotional development, shaping them into informed, empathetic, and engaged individuals.

6. Conclusion

The exploration of picturebooks through a three-lens approach—readerly, writerly, and content-area—reveals their immense potential in transforming literacy education. This multifaceted perspective aligns with curricular standards and caters to diverse learning styles, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive educational experience. This approach offers practical, impactful strategies for educators striving to enhance their classroom practices.

The readerly lens underscores the importance of picturebooks in developing essential reading skills (Dollins, 2020; Djavairovna, 2023; Martens et al., 2018; Montag et al., 2015; Moreillon, 2017; Mourão, 2021; Niland, 2023). This lens highlights the role of engaging narratives and illustrations in enhancing vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking. For instance, the diversity of language in picturebooks, as noted by Montag et al. (2015), offers a rich linguistic experience that can significantly bolster a child's language development. The writerly lens positions picturebooks as mentor texts, which is particularly beneficial in enhancing students' writing skills (Montag, 2019; Premont et al., 2017; Ramos & Navas, 2022; Shubitz, 2016). Teachers can utilize picturebooks to demonstrate various writing techniques and styles, encouraging students to explore and emulate these in their writing, as Fletcher (2011) and Ray (1999) have suggested. Finally, the content-area lens encourages educators to select picturebooks that complement and enrich specific curricular areas (Axelrod et al., 2020; Bintz, 2011; Martínez-Carratalá, 2022; Ramos & Navas, 2022; Zhang et al., 2023), as demonstrated by Ada's Violin in teaching environmental stewardship (Hood, 2017). For example, teachers can integrate these texts into their lesson plans to provide a tangible context for abstract concepts, facilitating more profound understanding and engagement.

In practical classroom applications, educators can incorporate these lenses in various ways. For example, they might use picturebooks as a starting point for interdisciplinary projects, combining literacy with other content areas like science or social studies (Yuliana et al., 2021). In reading instruction, teachers can engage students in analyzing the narrative structure and language use in picturebooks, thus enhancing their analytical skills. Educators can select books that exemplify specific writing styles or techniques for writing instruction and use these as models for student writing exercises. Furthermore, selecting quality picturebooks, as outlined in the previous section, is crucial. Educators should consider age-appropriate books, align them with curriculum standards, and promote student empathy and understanding.

By integrating picturebooks into various content areas, educators can create interdisciplinary projects that combine literacy with other subjects like science or social studies (Yuliana et al., 2021). Teachers can engage students in analyzing the narrative structure and language use in picturebooks to enhance their analytical skills. Additionally, selecting age-appropriate, culturally relevant, and empathy-promoting picturebooks aligns with curriculum standards and resonates with students' lives and fosters a deeper connection to learning.

The three-lens approach to using picturebooks in literacy education offers educators a dynamic and effective strategy. By implementing these lenses, teachers can enhance the educational value of picturebooks, thereby enriching the teaching and learning process. This approach supports academic development and nurtures students' lifelong love for reading and learning. As educators, our goal is to create a learning environment that is both educational and inspiring, and the strategic use of picturebooks through this approach can be a significant step in achieving this objective.

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