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With emphasis on the wordless genre, discuss ways in which pictures in picturebooks contribute to educational and emotional development.

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Abstract

This study examines how [wordless] picturebooks contribute to emotional and educational development. Research collected from a wide range of current sources, together with analysis of picturebook examples using a range of theories, illustrate how they cross cultural, generational and linguistic boundaries to benefit a wide audience. Findings from this research show that there is a great deal of evidence to support the constructive use of wordless picturebooks across a range of contexts and particularly within literacy, language and emotional development.

Key words:

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1. Introduction

The modern picturebook is defined by Salisbury and Styles (2012: 7) as being sequential imagery used in a particular way, often in conjunction with words, which communicates meaning. However many picturebooks contain no text within the story and so are therefore 'wordless'. This essay will examine pictures in picturebooks and investigate their relevance to emotional and educational development in readers, focussing on wordless examples and those tackling sensitive themes. Thorough analysis will be made of evidence available from a range of current academic sources, as well as consideration of picturebook examples as supporting evidence. A variety of theories will consider aspects of images, including *Semiotics*, *Redundancy and Entropy* and *Iconography and Iconology*; with concepts such as culture, age and language being important considerations throughout. These concepts undoubtedly contribute to reader understanding of images, and this essay will consider these carefully before reaching conclusions. Addressing a theme closely related to personal practice, the aim is to show that, by studying available research and evidence how [wordless] picturebooks contribute to educational and emotional development before conclusively advocating their value as a learning resource tool.

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2.   Picturebooks and wordless picturebooks: a brief history and background

Foundations were being laid for modern picturebooks many years ago: among the tombs of ancient Egypt and structures in Pompeii, stories were told using pictures in particular order. One of the oldest examples, Trajan's Column in Rome (fig.1) tells of Trajan's successful battles during the second century AD (Salisbury & Styles, 2012: 10); and The Bayeux Tapestry (fig. 2) illustrates the Norman conquest; importantly reading in chronological order; left to right (McCloud, 1993: 12).   The modern printing press invented in the fifteenth century by Johannes Gutenberg, saw the rise of book printing (Palermo, 2014). From the fifteenth century onwards, picturebooks began to appear, as 'chapbooks' (roughly assembled pages of text and randomly selected images) were sold by pedlars in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries (Salisbury and Styles, 2012: 12-13). Commonly accepted as being the first children's picturebook, *Orbis Pictus* (Comenius, circa 1657) illustrated words with pictures (Nodelman, 1988: 2). In the late eighteenth century William Blake created children's books combining text and image: *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* (Salisbury, 2005: 9), when lithography was introduced, meaning colour no longer had to be added by hand. But the nineteenth century saw beginnings of a golden age for colour printing; when children's books began to flourish and book illustration became a recognised, valued art form (Salisbury, 2005: 10). *Funny Stories and Droll Pictures* (Hoffmann, 1844) directly influenced modern picturebooks, with its somewhat violent themes depicting consequences of bad behaviour (Salisbury & Styles, 2012: 14); setting the tone for *cross-over* picturebooks to be discussed later. Less fear arousing than moral focussed publications for children in the sixteenth century, nineteenth century children's books took a more light hearted approach, as seen in *Under the Window* (Kate Greenaway, 1878) and *Randolph Caldecott's Picture books* (1878-1884, British Library: n.d.).

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Caldecott pioneered the interplay between pictures and words, which no longer duplicated but complimented each other (Salisbury & Styles, 2012: 16). Unpatronising in approach by not focussing on moral lessons he consciously created them with adult and child appeal (Desmarais, 2006: xv); commonly becoming accepted as the founding father of picturebooks (Salisbury & Styles, 2012: 16).

The picturebook can be defined as being where words and pictures are of equal importance, but this can be expanded to include books with pictures not necessarily aimed at children and not conforming to modern conventions (Salisbury, 2015: 9). This genre will be visited later in the essay.
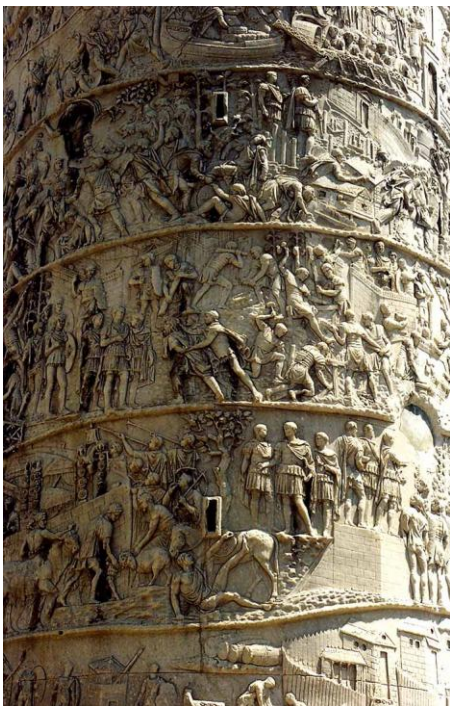
Figure 1 (above left): Trajan's Column, detail, AD 113 (Source: crystalinks.com., n.d.)

Figure 2 (above right): Bayeux Tapestry, 1080, fragment (Source: Kren, E., Marx, D., n.d., Web Gallery of Art, n.d.)

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3.   How do pictures work and how do children learn to 'read' them?

3.1 Signs and symbols

Semiotically, each part of the picturebook functions as a sign having potential to contribute meaning to the story (Sipe, 2001); with the importance of signs becoming more important in texts unsupported by words. Wordless picturebooks have grown in popularity over the last few decades: Dowhower (1997: 63) describes wordless books as being where images rather than words tell stories and convey meaning. According to Beckett (2012, in Arizpe, 2013) all books contain some words such as title pages, or words *within* illustrations (e.g. fig. 3 & 4). Some books are 'almost wordless' with only one or two words making up the written narrative.
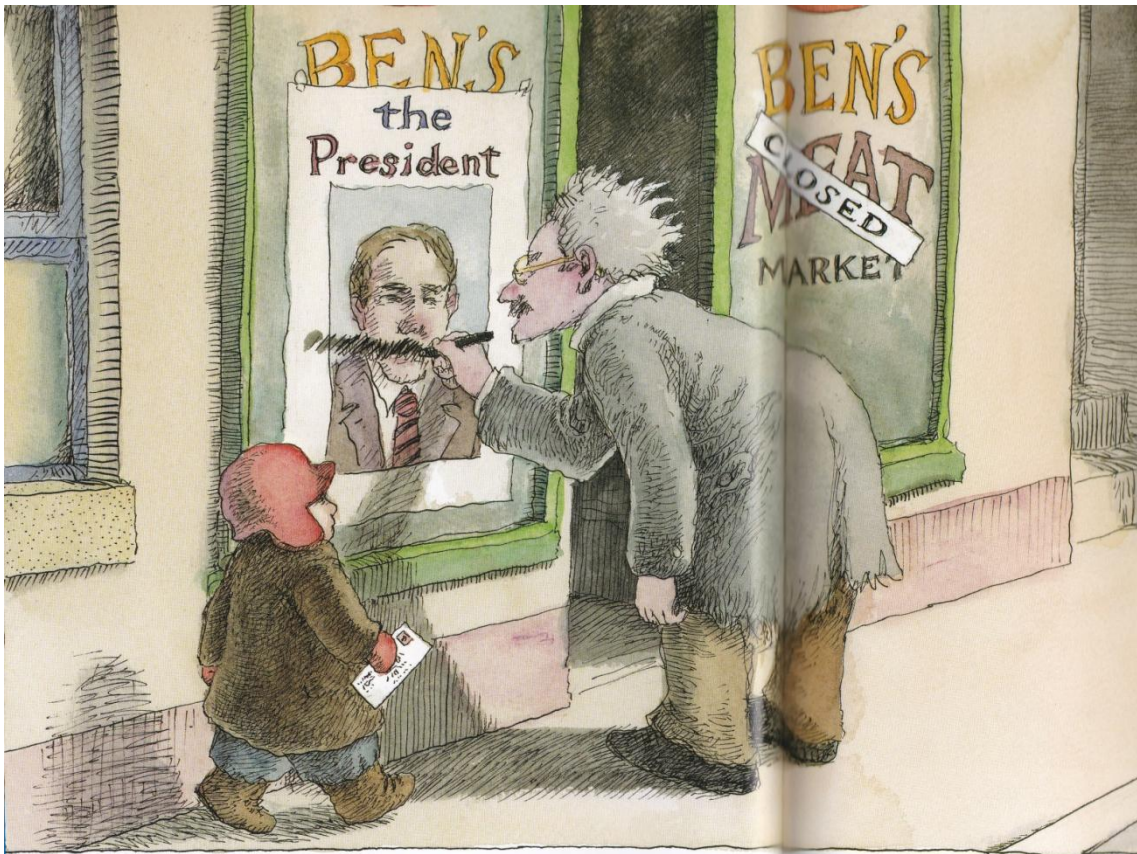

Figure 3: *No!* Words within illustration example [16-17] (Source: McPhail, D., 2011. *No!* London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books)

Figure 4: *No!* **Single word text illustration example [22] (Source: McPhail, D., 2011.** *No!* **London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books)**

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Pictures on a page are just marks made with ink until our brains transform them into something meaningful (Rosenblatt, 2005:62) but the significance of pictures and visual representation in learning has been apparent for centuries; when images conveying religious and moral messages to communities (e.g. Lindisfarne Gospels, AD 715-20, in Brown, 2011: 35) were necessary due to high levels of illiteracy. In early illustrated books, it is clear how symbolism and cultural influences greatly impacted upon design and visual communication.

Huitt & Hummel (2003), explaining Piaget's theory *Pre-operational stage of cognitive development* suggest that what characterises human beings from other animals is their reasoning and ability to use abstract symbolism; toddlers begin demonstrating intelligence by memory, imagination and use of signs and symbols. Before speaking, children communicate using a variety of gestures and symbols (Acredolo & Goldwyn, 1985, 1988, in De Loache, 1991); making meanings from pictures through familiarity. From around two years old children have the capacity to imagine an object is something else; can role-play, relate to abstract objects and shapes as well as create simple drawings within the context of reality; and through imitation, learn to create and relate to symbols within their cultural framework (Rakoczy *et al*, n.d.). Semiotically there is often little or no relationship between *signifier* [symbol or image used to depict something] and *signified* [object / theme being depicted by signifier] and this is especially true with words; e.g. the word 'cat' bears no resemblance to the cat itself (Nodelman, 1988: 5). The more *signifiers* represent reality, the easier they are to understand (Graham, 1990: 7). So how do children learn to interpret images which can bear little resemblance to depicted concepts? After conducting an experiment on a child who'd had no exposure to pictorial representation for the first nineteen months of life, Hochberg and Brooks (1962) found the child still able to name all objects signified by outline drawings. Conclusions showed the ability to read abstract imagery being intrinsic rather than taught. Illustrator Browne (*Zoo,* 1994, & *The Tunnel,* 1989) also suggested children have an instinctive ability to read pictures, with those who cannot even read words able to explain stories through understanding visual metaphor and signs (in Arizpe & Styles, 2003: 250).

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3.2   Illustration strategies

Each aspect of picturebook illustration contains meaning and conveys certain messages: success depends on numerous factors including colour, line, medium and iconography being addressed appropriately. Graham (1990: 42) says illustrators draw attention to particular aspects of stories; using various strategies to convey mood, atmosphere and emotion; considering carefully how characters are depicted, as well as details such as clothing (including on animals), colour and line. Every detail is not required to communicate plot and character, and subtlety can be more effective in conveying information and promoting intrigue in readers, an approach currently being employed in personal practice to communicate sensitive subject matter. Fig.5 shows an example from *The Lion and the Mouse* (Pinkney, 2011) where, unlike the reader, Mouse is unaware of impending danger when innocently climbing onto Lion's back. Although readers don't see the whole lion they can identify it while being empowered by knowing what character doesn't. *Page turners* (gripping plots encouraging readers to continue reading) are frequently used in successful picturebooks. *The Rainstorm* (Lehman, 2007, fig.6) captivates: seemingly never ending spiral staircases and doors entice readers to discover more, and as we know from the title this wordless book concerns a bored boy on a rainy day; we expect something exciting to happen. Titles of books contribute significantly to understanding of visual text in wordless picturebooks (Evans, 2015: 182; & Nodelman, 1988: 185).
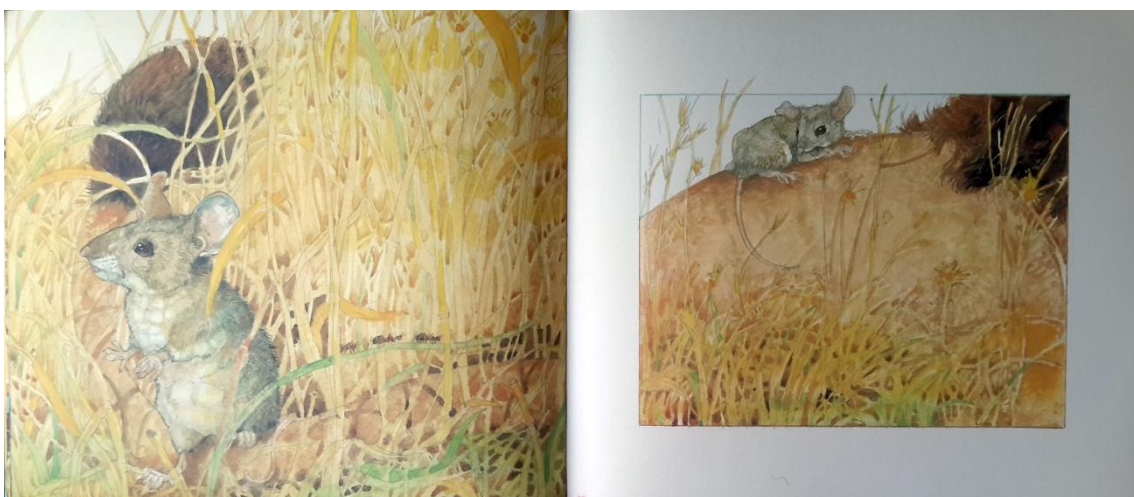

Figure 5: Double page spread illustration from T*he Lion and the Mouse* [10-11] (Source: Pinkney, J., 2011, *The Lion and the Mouse*, London: Walker Books).

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Figure 6 : Double page spread illustrations from *The Rainstorm* [14-15] (Source: Lehman, B., 2007, *The Rainstorm.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Company).

Illustrators need cultural awareness when creating picturebooks: culture undoubtedly plays a determining role in interpretation of images, argues Kennedy (in Nodelman, 1988: 10). Colledge (2005) stresses the importance of recognising culturally specific signifiers such as stereotypes, gender roles, décor and dress in classroom environments; which all affect individual understanding. Colour has natural associations as well as cultural ones differing between societies: black represents fear and death (Evans, 2015: 184); although in other countries white symbolises grief; and blues tend to be universally representative of serenity and spirituality (Beckett, 2012: 28). Nikolajeva (2013) also addresses colour in images; saying that yellow and green are often associated with joy, red with anger and black and grey with distress. Knowledge of these and other visual signs such as movement lines (common in comics), a zigzag mouth representing anger, hair standing on end to show fear or a character cowering in the corner to show isolation and distress, contribute to visual literacy and can be practiced and encouraged. Graham (1990: 32) discusses the importance of metaphor and symbolism in communicating effectively to readers while deconstructing several picturebooks, including wordless example *The Snowman* (Briggs, 2013, fig.7). She indicates that though

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Briggs' characters are simplistic; one line used to describe a smiling mouth, a slight tilt of head and gentle movement of arms; they are memorable and believable. In fact naively drawn faces help children identify with characters as they place themselves *within* the character (Graham: 36). This concept is identified by McCloud who argues that we only see ourselves fully when we look in the mirror and thus simplify our view of ourselves in our minds: we identify with iconic abstraction to *become* the character as opposed to *observing* them (1993: 44-6); presenting a case for comic style representation in promoting emotional connection.
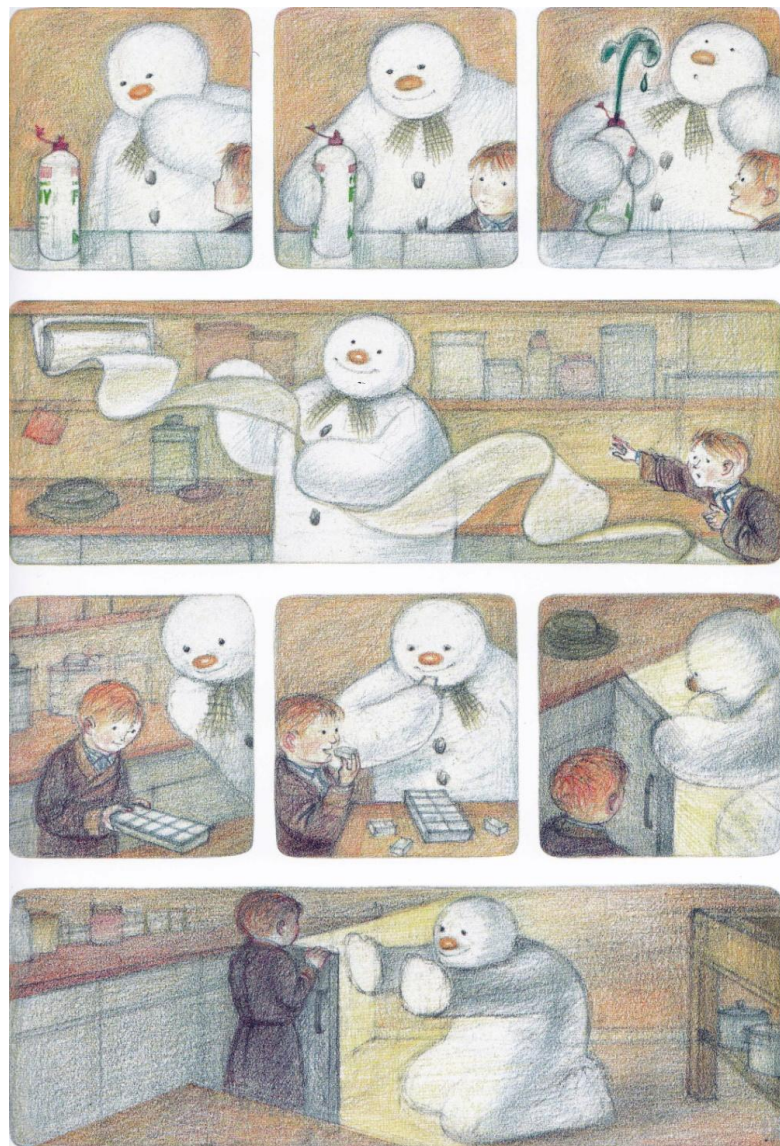
First published in 1978 *The Snowman* is possibly one of the most well known and pioneering wordless narratives; combining picturebook illustration with comic style layout of panels and gutters. Its coloured pencil illustration is gentle and soft flowing; enhancing delicate snow and the snowman himself. Calming, blue hues represent night with the contrasting soft yellow warming light of home. Snowman has an air of innocence cleverly depicted by subtle features, facial expressions and gentle body language ensuring appeal to young readership. Simplistic styling of the boy, invites readers to *become* rather than *observe* him. In contrast to the calm and welcoming style of the illustrations in *The Snowman, Here I am* (Kim & Sanchez, 2014, fig. 8) has a confused and eclectic visual language; powerfully conveying feelings of an immigrant child struggling to settle in his new country.

Figure 8: *Here I am!* Double page spread illustrations [6-7] (Source: Kim, P., & Sanchez, S., 2014, *Here I Am!* London: Curious Fox)

Often monochromatic schemes can be more effective than colour at conveying meaning: *Loup Noir* [Black Wolf] (Guilloppe, 2004) uses binary opposites of black and white to create mood. Interestingly throughout the story, Wolf is black: telling viewers he is to be feared; until the end when he becomes white: a twist informing readers Wolf is misunderstood and not evil as expected. Had the story been illustrated in full colour, contrast between binary oppositional concepts good and evil, dark and light; and day and night would be less powerful and clear.

The illustrator also uses many angles and perspectives to create surprise, such as aerial and worm's eye (Evans, 2015: 186-87, fig.9). *Gestalt* (unified whole) *Psychology* theorises that humans perceive things not part of basic sensations (Boeree, 2000): Guilloppe employs Gestalt principles: *Closure* (trees not complete but reader knows from experience they are rooted in ground)*, Symmetry and Order* (visual balance achieved in the lower spread), *Continuation* (footprints used to guide readers into the image along a path) and *Figure and Ground* (white space creates trees and ground) effectively communicating atmosphere. These principles are used by illustrators to create visual intrigue, lead the eye to particular aspects of images or create illusion. As we can see illustrations play a key role in affecting reader inferences which in turn affects how they learn, and feel emotion from texts.

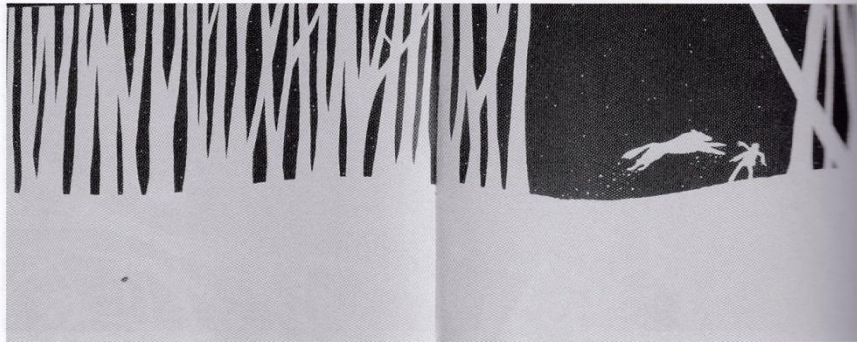**186** Challenging and controversial picturebooks

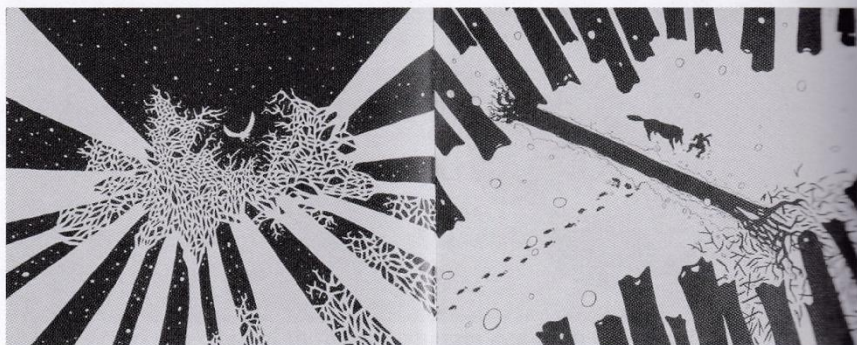FIGURE 9.4 Opening 9, *Loup Noir*: Black wolf becomes white wolf.

FIGURE 9.5 Opening 11, *Loup Noir*: Different perspectives surprise the reader.

Figure 9: Page fragment [p. 186] from *Challenging and Controversial Picturebooks*, showing *Loup Noir* (Guilloppe, A., 2004) Opening 9 & Opening 11 double page spreads (Source: Evans, J., 2015*, Challenging and Controversial Picturebooks: Creative and Critical Responses to Visual Texts*, Oxon: Routledge).

4. Do pictures in picturebooks assist emergent reading skills, visual literacy development and social imagination?

Often as adults we assume being more experienced readers, that we have better understanding of pictures, either in isolation or in conjunction with text. However very often children notice things we don't, even though we are actively seeking meaning (Styles, 2003: x). This concept is beautifully illustrated in wordless picturebook *Footpath Flowers* (Lawson & Smith, 2016): valuing the bird's life, the child tenderly places flowers (symbolic of respect and used at funerals) upon a dead bird gone unnoticed by the adult: showing empathy and caring skills and emotionally engaging readers. The monochromatic scheme of this book and the girl's red coat assist readers in following the story who quickly realise she is the protagonist. The layout and illustrations observe the Gestalt principle of *Continuation* where the eye is led along pathways to secondary elements (in fig. 10; literal pathways leading to her father).

Figure 10: Double page spread [18-19] illustrations. (Source: Lawson & Smith, *Footpath Flowers*, London: Walker Books)

There is an argument against pictures in children's books: Protheroe (1992: 35-36) argued that they hinder imagination and damage the capacity for intellectual growth and reading skills development. Bettelheim (1976, in Graham, 1990: 17) suggested pictures are distracting and prevent personal meaning making; and Tolkien (1964, in Graham: 17) famously claimed that illustrations add very little to fairy stories. However, Arizpe and Styles (2003) disagreed and their research indicates that pictures in picturebooks contribute positively to developing literacy skills. Working with challenging picturebooks *Zoo* and *The Tunnel* (Browne, 1994;

Browne, 1989, fig.11) which have multiple layers of meaning, Arizpe and Styles asked children to describe pictures in several sophisticated, multi-layered picturebooks to consider character emotion, reasons behind actions of characters and why illustrators used colour, perspective and body language in particular ways. The eighty-four children from different cultural and economic backgrounds and seven primary schools, showed keen observation skills and meaning making, with one child, Tosin, noticing details like the relevance of different wall coverings to convey mood. The girl dressed in pastel colours against wallpaper presents a homely, calm personality; in contrast the boy's vibrant clothing connotes energy, enhanced by the brick wall backdrop. Tosin was also able to use descriptions such as 'softer' and 'warmer' to describe images representing positive or negative aspects of the storyline; responding to light, tone and colour; as well as expressing empathy for characters (Arizpe & Styles, 2003: 175-178). Through a process of one to one interviews and open ended group discussion, despite different cultural backgrounds, age and linguistic abilities children in the experiment showed a variety of intellectual, emotive and perceptive responses, including eight and 9 year old special needs children, demonstrating particularly detailed drawing responses. Protheroe who advocates reading material without images, argued that teachers can suppress children's individuality by providing illustrated books and asking comprehension questions (1992: 71) and the act of discussing texts undoubtedly enhanced children's' understanding of them here, but clearly children already possess the ability to use diverse visual literacy skills in this way (Arizpe & Styles, 2003: 247). Conclusively, challenging examples of picturebooks require highly interactive reading: enhancing speaking, listening, visual, emotional and educational learning as well as providing opportunity for discussing moral and social issues. However, the relevancy of visual information should be carefully considered, as according to Hale & Piper (1973) children less than thirteen years old have difficulty in disregarding irrelevant information; meaning that unnecessary visual details can actually be an obstacle in their learning. Learning to read pictures it seems, is a natural process of early childhood development which can be nurtured by the utilisation of picturebooks within the educational setting.
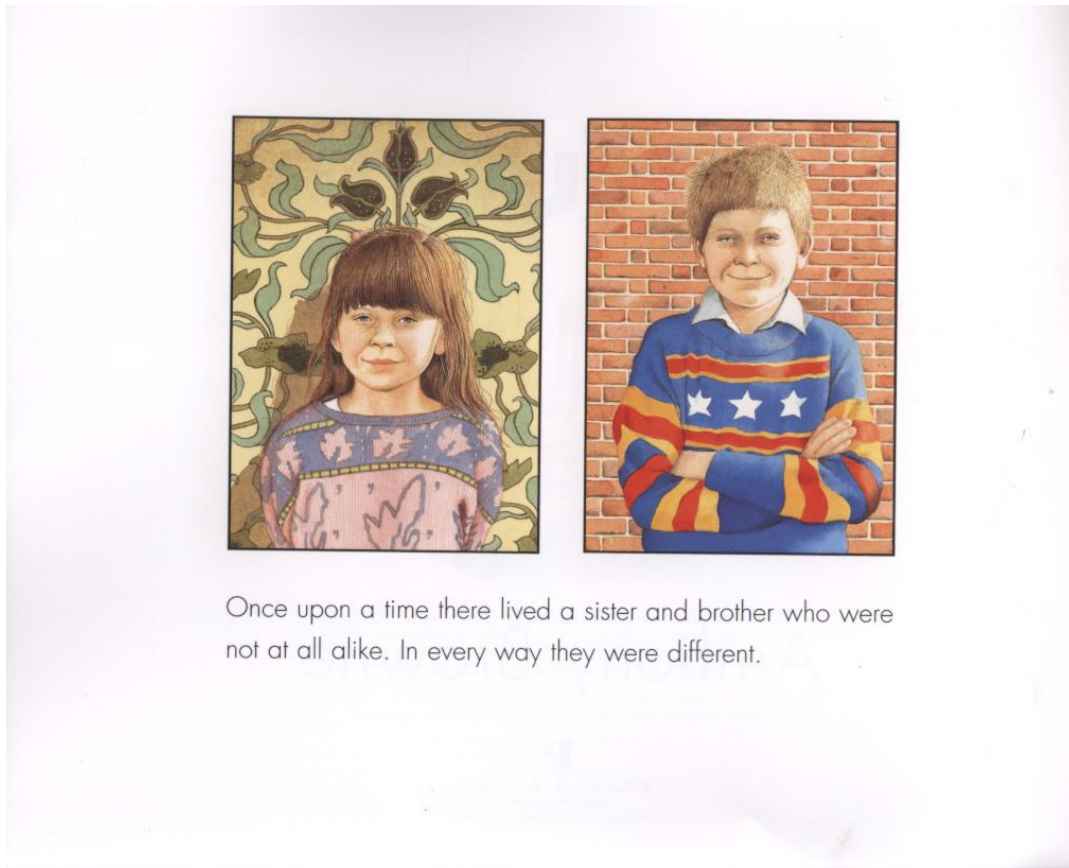
Figure 11: Browne, A., 2008, illustration from *The Tunnel* (Source: Brownsbfs.co.uk, 2014)

Pictures provide choice and time to construct meaning. In reading pictures children can focus on key areas, before considering other elements, while with print there is a start and finish point (Kress, 1997, in Lysaker & Hopper, 2015). Identifying connections between objects and learning to make inference is vital in learning to read (Graham, 1990: 67), which children can achieve by consulting personal experience to create dialogue and verbalise events in pictures (Lysaker & Hopper, 2015). In early print [reading] strategies children use a system of *searching*: scanning the page for identifiable elements; *cross-checking*: comparing what they see with what they know and considering if this represents true meaning; *self correction*: changing their words or phrases to ones more appropriate based on their searching and cross-checking; and *re-reading*: returning to the beginning in efforts to gain deeper meaning from text, alter intonation or make reading sound more like speaking (Clay, 1993 in Lysaker & Hopper). Revisiting images assists in learning basic image sequencing and literacy conventions before progressing onto more sophisticated meaning construction suggests Cohn (2014). We can see high levels of interaction are clearly required to extract full understanding from

narrative sequences. It is important picturebooks be engaged with several times before full potential for literacy development and meaning can be obtained.

Using wordless picturebook *I Had Measles* (Wright Group, 1987), Lysaker and Hopper (2015) look at how preschool children gain meaning from pictures as a foundational aid to discovering books with print, with research focussed on visible meaning making strategies such as pausing, hesitation and scanning pages. The child in this study displayed early print strategies many times while attempting to explain the story based on her knowledge and experience; with results indicating the presence of emergent reading strategies and ability to make meaning from wordless picturebooks. Wordless texts also encourage discussion and development of interpretive skills; which should not be abandoned to focus heavily upon print strategies, which can be detrimental to early literacy comprehension and reading ability (Lysaker & Hopper, 2015). Unfortunately though, in prioritising print literacy development, teachers often overlook the importance of pictures as integral in meaning making processes; and how exploring them involves all senses and recourse to experience (Evans, 1998: x; Kiefer, 1995, in Arizpe & Styles, 2007: 27).

In deciphering wordless narratives children become acquainted with visual sequencing, gutters, page turners, panels and reading conventions in order to explore narrative possibilities; enhancing reading skills and visual literacy development. Ideas can be shared and discussed, which supports reading print texts later. Social imagination, which enables us to predict behaviour, thoughts, feelings or actions of others (Aeiou Foundation, 2016) is also nurtured. Serafini (2014) argues that wordless texts are possibly the best platform for introducing all ages to reading processes, and assisting understanding of visual strategies and narrative conventions. Being able to explore the possibilities images provide is an important part of achieving visual literacy (Serafini, 2010, 2012 in Serafini 2014). As demonstrated by Lysaker & Hopper (2015), children draw upon their own knowledge in order to create meaning. Where pictures provide sole narrative, readers must in greater detail analyse ways picturebooks work and break down images using semiotic deconstruction (Arizpe, 2013); undoubtedly resulting in developing critical skills and increased engagement. Living in a world surrounded by images means it is necessary early in life to make meaning from them, as visual information enables us to understand the world we live in: social imagination can assist in this meaning making process as well as be a result of it.

5. Who benefits from wordless picturebooks?

Wordless picturebooks are arguably one of the most versatile communication tools available: having no words they transcend cultural, gender and linguistic boundaries and often have trans-generational appeal. Far from being inferior to their counterparts due to lack of words, Serafini (2014) argues that wordless texts should be valued for what they do contain rather than for what they don't. Pictures possess the ability to be understood by anyone, including the uneducated, even recognised by Pope Gregory the Great (circa 600, Brown, 2011: 37), and their positive contribution to education cannot be denied. However, images may cross cultural, social, national and economic boundaries, says Protheroe, but they also compromise development of mathematical and reading skills, scientific imagination and overall cognitive capabilities (1992: 7). Conversely, many scholars argue for the benefits of picturebooks to educational and social learning, and we have seen that images have always played an important role in storytelling.

Werner (1984, in Graham, 1990) explains it is possible for even blind children to experience picturebooks; though their minds must work harder to formulate images by using other senses. Comprehension can be achieved not only through Braille, but by deployment of interactive features (flips, wheels, pop-ups); accompanying audio; 3D printing and textured pages in wordless picturebooks. Tom Yeh, creator of the *Tactile Picture Books Project* is developing software allowing users to create 3D versions of any picturebook, and has already produced famous titles such *as The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, E., 1969, in Goodreads. 2008) and *Noah's Ark* (fig. 12): which shows raised image as well as Braille.

In a structured and organised setting all ages with communication difficulties can benefit from using wordless picturebooks as conversation starters and to develop speaking and listening skills; this social interaction can enhance everyday verbal expression and help towards psychological stability. Storytelling is inherent in life, and interaction with this supports multi-modal learning and communication skills as well as providing a platform for readers to relate stories to their own feelings and experiences to aid comprehension (Waller & Black, 2012, in Grove, 2013).

Dowhower (1997: 64) suggests primary beneficiaries from wordless picturebook reading are young children, culturally and linguistically challenged individuals and those with special needs. It does seem that because of their universal nature picturebooks now frequently address a range of social challenges: a necessary approach, particularly so in a multi cultural modern society. A touching example dealing with disability as a sub-plot, is wordless narrative *The Snow Rabbit* (Garoche, 2015). The narrative highlights *ability* as part of *disability* (the disabled girl provides comfort and security for her able bodied sister (fig.13).

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Figure 13: *The Snow Rabbit* double page spread [34-35] (Source: Garoche, C., 2015. *The Snow Rabbit*. New York: Enchanted Lion Books)

One key difference between reading books with print or without, is that readers apply their own voice to wordless narratives, rather than the author's. This illustrates a partnership between author / illustrator and reader (Evans, 2015: 183). Weisner, illustrator of several wordless picturebooks, claims he regularly receives feedback from teachers all over the world who use his books as a means of developing creative writing and discussions in class (in Richey & Puckett, 1992: vii). Clearly wordless narratives can open up a wealth of communication possibilities with far fewer barriers than their counterparts.

Considering immigrant children, Coultard (2003, in Arizpe & Styles, 2003: 164-189) stresses that culture, personal experiences and ways images [and text] have been approached previously, all influence how wordless narratives are interpreted. Graham (1990: 83) says although images are culturally specific and therefore present comprehension issues on some level, they can also be used as a tool to aid mutual understanding in children from various cultural backgrounds. However it is inevitable that responses to visual texts will be diverse. Perhaps an ideal wordless picturebook for discussing cultural differences is *Mirror* (Baker, 2010, fig. 14) which follows the story of two families in Australia and Morocco, who live very different lives but still have so much in common. Galda & Short (1993) argue that in developing visual literacy children gain deeper meaning from literature and learn more about the world,

and this book enables readers to do that. The images are felt pieces and other materials which provide a 3D feel; and pages from both books are read simultaneously to compare cultures. The medium also provides warmth to the images; welcoming readers into the scene as children remember craft sessions at school or adults reminisce about *fuzzy felt*. The relevance of medium in illustration and even how paint application conveys meaning, mood and atmosphere is clear (Doonan, 1993: 13; Evans, 2015: 182; Nodelman, 1988: 74). Colourful soft felt pieces create a significantly different atmosphere to solid monochromatic schemes (fig.9) or eclectic paint splashes and scribble lines (fig.8).

Figure 14: *Mirror*, spreads from both books within the book (Source: Baker, J., *Mirror*, 2010, London: Walker Books)

Evans (1998: 81) acknowledges the value of wordless picturebooks as a solid basis upon which to learn English as they can be interpreted on a personal level by readers. Louie and Sierschynski (2015: 104) suggest that wordless picturebooks don't confuse English learners and, as oral discussion forms the basis of literacy development, so literacy practices should make use of wordless picturebooks which aid discussion. Looking specifically at new English learners, Louie and Sierschynski explore how classroom settings encourage language development by using wordless narratives. When broken down into small groups or pairs of learners, children have opportunities to vocalise their perceptions of images, can stop, think, self-correct and construct descriptive sentences: all aiding literacy learning and communication. Protheroe who advocates reading material without images, argues that teachers can suppress children's individuality by providing illustrated books and asking comprehension questions (1992: 71); while Fisher, Frey, & Rothenberg (2008: 5-20) state that engaging in meaningful conversation as opposed to simply answering questions is especially important for English learners to achieve academic literacy. Beck & McKeown (2001, in Louie & Sierschynski) also stress that self- correction (as opposed to teacher correction) should be employed to enable creative language exploration, constructive discussion and literacy learning. Thus it is important adults construct environments in which children can freely

express personal inferences without being limited to rigid frameworks. Small group discussions also aid deeper interpretation and enrich individual understanding of wordless texts as participants attempt to construct meaning. They can then use pictures as tools for creating written and oral output, and learning about literacy structure, language and culture (Louie & Sierschynski). Immigrant children, and adults, are prime beneficiaries from constructive use of wordless picturebooks.   Images are a vital source of cultural learning for newcomers to a country who have no knowledge about its language and customs, argues Arizpe (2009: 134).

Wordless picturebooks cross generational boundaries, thus appealing to any age; either as an art object, source of nostalgia, therapeutic tool or as a means of telling stories readers identify with (e.g. Tan's *The Arrival*, fig. 20). Known as *cross-over* picturebooks, those tackling sensitive issues have cross generational appeal and contain multi-layered meaning. The importance of picturebook desirability to adults cannot be underestimated: many winners of children's literature prizes go to books with strong adult appeal (Beckett, 2012: 16). Furthermore, learning to read means being able to identify different levels of meaning within a text (Goodwin, in Evans 2009); in reading development, the ability to construct inferences and imagine more than shown on the page, is vital in learning to read and achieving full engagement (Duke *et al,* 2004: 501-20; Sweet & Snow, 2002: 17-53). Therefore, cross-over books can provide an ideal platform for learning to read, raising awareness of social issues and about the world we live in.

Personal practice currently sees the illustration of a wordless picturebook based on a 'real life' Cinderella and addresses themes such as child neglect, favouritism, bullying and emotional abuse, so fits well in the cross-over category as well as addressing the previous point. Often themes covered by this genre of books can be described as *challenging* or *controversial*, and Evans (2015: 11) points out that depression [*The Red Tree*, Tan, S., 2015, fig. 20-22], death [*Granpa*, Burningham, J., 1984, fig.19], violence, drugs [*Bird*, Elliot, Z., & Strickland, S., 2008], war [*Why?* Popov, N.,1996, fig. 15 &16], and bullying, although often considered unsuitable for children, are nothing new. Now far removed from their original form, the sanitisation of fairy tales began in the nineteenth century due to regulation seeking to protect children from having 'improper thoughts and ideas' argues Zipes (2013: 16); suggesting that folk tales have a solid foundation in culture and values while representing certain points in history (in Merriam, 2015). Originally not written for children, fairy tales have changed greatly over the centuries

and, cross culturally, around the world, while remaining relevant and providing readers with material to identify with and learn from. Lewis Carroll, Ruy Vidal and Maurice Sendak also didn't just target children (Beckett, 2012: 3-5) and their books cross generational boundaries while also standing the test of time. This reinforces intentions for personal practice to be cross-generational in appeal and not being limited to children. *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, first published 1964) for example is still a best seller; demonstrating Sendak's approach in refusing to lie to children (in Brockes, 2011) has paid off.

6.   How do picturebooks deal with emotional issues and challenges?

Graham (1990) and Evans (1998: 166) argue strongly that images in picturebooks encourage emotional as well as intellectual growth. Illustrators, especially working within wordless picturebooks, have huge responsibility toward reader engagement and response. Doonan (1993: 11, 51), suggests the act of searching for meaning in imagery engages us emotionally as well as cognitively, and provokes emotional responses; clearly providing potential for emotional growth. However, although picturebooks are gradually being recognised for their contribution to visual literacy and learning, they are largely ignored when it comes to promoting emotional development (Nicolajeva, 2013: 249). This is despite growing importance of empathy and understanding, as social awareness about issues such as bullying grows (Slee & Mohya, 2007). Empathy is a key social skill, and due to limited childhood emotional experience, picturebooks provide an effective platform to aid development of this emotion (Nikolajeva, 2013).

Figure 15 : Double page spread [8-9] (Source: Popov, N., 1996. Why? New York: North South Books Inc.)

Figure 16 : Double page spread [38-39] (Source: Popov, N., 1996. Why? New York: North South Books Inc.)

As already discussed, illustrators employ various strategies to convey meaning in images. Redundant (visually predictable) features are possibly used more so in wordless picturebooks to ensure children understand narratives, but entropic (visually unpredictable) features convey meaning on a deeper level which often may only be fully understood by adults. Popov (*Why?* 1996) uses anthropomorphism (presenting animals to convey human emotions, thoughts and actions) to explain the devastating consequences and futility of war. Fig. 15 shows the two animals in a green, pleasant setting with no worries in the world; until they begin waging war against each other which quickly escalates out of control. At the end of the story fig. 16 shows bleak contrast; war has destroyed the earth and all living things. Each animal has something which belonged to the other (flower and umbrella have changed ownership) but both are destroyed. It is perhaps unlikely that young children would pick up on such entropic details on first viewing; however, as seen wordless narratives can be revisited many times to identify deeper meaning. These multiple layers add narrative and visual interest for all ages as well as being emotionally challenging. Redundant features such as green, sunny scenes representing calm and happiness, and muddy, chaos depicting destruction are easily understood and incite particular emotions in readers. Even young children recognise the significance of colour and

iconographical details such as broken vegetation stumps and dull skies representing foreboding. These two spreads alone convey emotion, and the author's personal experience of war undoubtedly contributes to the success of this emotionally charged narrative. Personal involvement surely contributes to illustrative success of such themes, and intentions are for current personal work to produce highly effective outcomes on this basis.

Due to their handling of sensitive subject matter, cross-over books can introduce children to social issues and encourage empathy.   Examples such as *Unspoken: A Story from the Underground Railroad* (Cole, 2012) is an example of sophisticated visual narrative: a young girl finds an escaped slave hiding in her barn and helps him escape to freedom, but never does the reader see the slave, as he hides behind the corn stack (fig.17). Subtlety in image enables children to imagine and draw upon personal experience which induces emotional response: young children can use their experience of playing hide and seek to gain understanding of how the slave feels hiding, for example.

The girl in *Unspoken* demonstrates emotional understanding and empathy; understanding the slave's plight is in her hands. Fig. 18 shows her anxiously thinking about the slave in the barn but her family are oblivious; similar to the event described in *Footpath Flowers* earlier (fig. 10). Realistic graphite illustration adds to the historicity of the theme, enabling readers to feel distant from the emotional issues being tackled, however iconographical features such as the rural setting, prayers at dinner, baskets of eggs, horses and large fireplaces all set tone and atmosphere which readers can put into rural context. The book's nostalgic styling means adults would likely be prime appreciators of this book.

Figure 17: Recto [17] page illustration (Source: Cole, H., 2012, Unspoken: A Story from the Underground Railroad, New York: Scholastic Press)
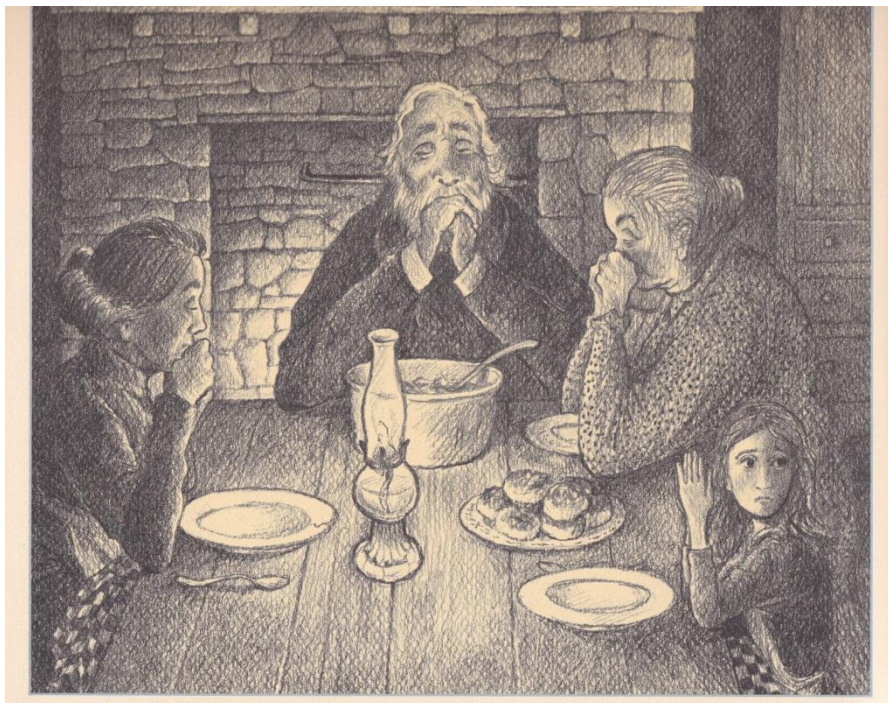

Figure 18: Verso [20] page illustration (Source: Cole, H., 2012, Unspoken: A Story from the Underground Railroad, New York: Scholastic Press)

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Granpa (Burningham, 2003) approaches the subject of death [of a grandparent]: something many children have to face. It's touching final spread simply shows Granpa's green empty chair (fig. 19); subtly informing the reader of his passing. The sensitive subject is connoted rather than denoted; leaving readers to imagine the details. Granddaughter sits looking on: body language indicating she is upset, confused, sad and isolated. Suddenly she becomes a line drawing as opposed to a fully coloured character which reflects her feelings of despair; allowing readers to *become* rather than *observe* her, as seen earlier in *The Snowman*. This promotes empathy in readers as they feel the girl's pain.

Figure 19: Double page spread from Granpa [30-31] (Source: Burningham, J., 2003, Granpa. London: Red Fox).

Unspoken and *Granpa* demonstrate the level of sophisticated thinking and emotional understanding expected from young children, as they begin to think independently, make moral decisions and empathise with others.

Colledge (2005), after working with bi-lingual children in promoting discussion of picturebook narratives, also concluded that emotional connections and empathic responses were displayed by children to characters in stories; indicating that discussing picturebook stories can contribute to emotional development. This heightens social imagination, a concept analysed by Lysaker and Miller (2013) when recording responses of a second grade student to a wordless picturebook. They noted she could provide descriptions not only of what is visible but also of thoughts and feelings of characters. She created roles for characters, established and maintained relationships between them; made moral decisions and imagined actions and events despite not within the illustrations. They concluded that wordless picturebooks help to develop not only social imagination but also moral decision making.

The Arrival (Tan, 2015), a wordless *cross-over* book (fig. 20) takes the format of graphic novel, and hundreds of illustrations provide readers with an immigrant man's story, whose feelings of alienation, fear and confusion are depicted by the use of surreal imagery throughout. Illustrations of surreal animals and unfamiliar letterforms describe aspects of the new society and are striking in enabling readers to empathise and feel his fear. The innocence depicted in the man's personality resembles that of the Snowman (fig.7) earlier who also felt confused about the indoor environment. Tan's *The Red Tree* (2015) also uses a similar approach: surrealism conveys a dark mood overshadowing emotions (fig. 21), metaphorical imagery connotes the girls' isolation, entrapment in her emotions and depression (fig. 22); and a bright red tree (iconographical symbol of life and growth) signals new beginnings and happiness (fig. 23).

Figure 20: Verso page of expressive illustration sequence [Chapter 2] (Tan, S., 2014, *The Arrival*)

Figure 20: Surrealism illustration example [10-11] (Source: Tan, S., 2015, The Red Tree. Sydney: Lothian Children's Books

Figure 21 (above left): Metaphorical illustration example [12-13] (Source: Tan, S., 2015, The Red Tree. Sydney: Lothian Children's Books. Figure 22 (above right): Red Tree illustration [34] (Source: Tan, S., 2015, The Red Tree. Sydney: Lothian Children's Books.

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Even as young as three years old, children can successfully describe character emotion through viewing pictures (Tucker, 1970, in Graham, 1990); and development of empathy begins when the children start recognising basic emotions such as fear, joy, anger or anguish (Evans, 1991, in, 2013). Picturebooks , and more so wordless picturebooks which rely solely on images to communicate, reach out to children in ways they can understand. Words on pages stating characters are sad or frightened may not be fully understood by young children, but illustrations of facial expressions, body language and gestures expressing character emotion are easily identified with (Nikolajeva, 2013). Nikolajeva argues that cognitive theories indicate the mouth and eyes are dominant in conveying emotion, which is why emoticons [simple iconic forms of human faces] are so widely understood; reflecting points made earlier about *The Snowman*. Although we easily respond to and understand gestures such as outstretched arms representing joy, and perceive visual emotional clues such as spatial position, we also identify with animal or inanimate objects as characters because, although we have no direct experience of animals' feelings, we anthropomorphise (assign human emotion) so it makes sense (Nikolajeva). In experiments recording child responses to emotional visual stimuli, Nikolajeva says reactions to images are similar to real life responses to similar stimuli: direct affective response caused by neurological signals and biological conditioning. Our brains react to images as if they were real life objects and situations to protect us from possible danger (Blackmore, 2010: 325-41), so the skills needed to make meaning from wordless narratives mirror those used in real life: skills which develop through experience.

Although it is perhaps straightforward to depict basic emotions such as happiness or sadness in illustration; social emotions (which include more than one individual) are less easy to depict. For example jealousy and pride which aren't connected directly to external demonstrations are much more challenging and difficult to interpret, though most world literature focuses on at least one social emotion, including picturebooks (Nikolajeva, 2013). Nikolajeva also suggests that children generally only emotionally identify with one character [the protagonist] without trying to understand thoughts and feelings of the others as this requires more complex social emotional understanding; but picturebooks provide the perfect platform for developing skills of empathy and theory of mind (understanding how others think) in young children; thus effectively contributing towards emotional intelligence.

7. Conclusion

As we have seen, picturebooks, and particularly wordless picturebooks due to their universality and lack of distractive features, can contribute greatly to overall development of educational and emotional learning. Their social and educational advantages in classroom environments cannot be overlooked and advantages for bi-lingual and immigrant children are clear, as shown in studies by Louie & Siershinski and Colledge. Nikolajeva, and Lysaker and Hopper among others show how picturebooks nurture empathy, incite creative responses and encourage social imagination. Although there is an argument that pictures damage children's ability to learn to read (Protheroe, Bettelheim), a large body of research shows enormous evidence to the contrary. In fact visual and verbal literacy and general communication skills are seen to be enhanced by using wordless picturebooks; as they cross linguistic, cultural, social and generational boundaries; encourage verbal discussion and pictorial or written responses; and form emotional connections and understanding in readers. Arizpe and Styles are clear that picturebooks provide an effective platform for cognitive reading and literacy development across cultural, linguistic and academic abilities, which in books without pictures would be denied. The genre encourages high levels of interaction between peers, adult and child; thus extending understanding of a range of social and moral issues.

This research certainly enhances and informs personal practice as the wordless picturebook genre is my preferred route of professional engagement. Aims include creating my own wordless narratives and, building upon discoveries made, I will certainly create more informed outcomes. Conveying emotion powerfully and effectively is essential in picturebook illustration: only becoming more vital in the wordless genre. Readers must be challenged so they can construct meaning themselves, but simultaneously need to understand and relate to illustrations in ways which don't prevent them from understanding the story. Wordless picturebooks can be revisited many times and multiple layers of meaning provide new sources of discovery as well as engagement for adults. The books I produce will be primarily cross-over in nature as I seek to appeal to broader audiences and explore difficult subjects I feel passionate about. This in itself presents challenges and needs to be handled sensitively so that, although having cross-generational appeal, they remain valid and suitable for young children. However my research is encouraging in this respect and I am inspired by successful authors and illustrators such as Maurice Sendak, Lewis Carroll and Ruy Vidal who didn't just produce books for children.

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