

# **A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words: Exploring Illustrations in Caldecott Award Books to Increase Vocabulary Acquisition**

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## **Overview**

"What is the use of a book," thought Alice "without pictures or conversation?"  
~from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

The objective of the curriculum unit, *A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words: Exploring Illustrations in Caldecott Award books to Increase Vocabulary Acquisition*, is to examine how the award winning illustrations capture the emotional appeal and responses of both young and old viewers and to provide a plethora of learning opportunities to build vocabulary in a kindergarten classroom. It will provide an introduction to Children's Literature through picture books and their illustrations with implications for educators to utilize illustrations to teach new words. After presenting a brief history and criteria for selection of this prestigious distinction, this unit will focus on the merits of using the Caldecott Award books to teach vocabulary development. Educators should recognize the elements of Caldecott books that appeal to children, which include their illustrations, characters, and genres. These books can be used to enhance student learning in a variety of ways. The books can be readily integrated with different subjects, related to important character principles, and used as a source of inspiration. Understanding the appeal and potential uses of Caldecott books can help teachers to value these books as vital resources for their classrooms.

This unit is intended for kindergarten students in a self-contained classroom. It should be completed after the second marking period when students have developed basic concepts of print and can engage in and experiment in reading and writing. Lessons will feature selections of Caldecott Award picture books in multiple genres in order to analyze the sequence of the illustrations using vocabulary that illustrators, publishers, and designers of picture books use. Activities will consist of familiarizing the students with the Caldecott medal, reviewing the criteria for selection of this award, discussing the various media in picture book illustrations, comparing illustrators, and creating individual

picture books. The culminating event will be a Book Award Ceremony equipped with podium, microphone, presenters, and of course, medals for favorite Caldecott Award Books.

## **Rationale**

How important are illustrations in learning how to read? The effectiveness of illustrations for increasing students' vocabulary knowledge and construction of meaning has been researched extensively. In fact, for centuries people have conveyed meaning through the use of visual images without the support of text. Wikipedia describes "illustration" as a "displayed visualization form presented as a drawing, painting, photograph or other work of art that is created to elucidate or dictate sensual information (such as a story, poem or newspaper article) by providing a visual representation graphically." Parents and educators provide picture books on the supposition that its pictures communicate more naturally and more directly than words, and consequently help young readers make sense of the texts.

Because there are thousands of picture books published annually, some that do a better job than others at allowing for differences in children's abilities and understanding, to narrow the scope of this unit, the focus will be on Caldecott Medal winners. Given that the Caldecott Medal is awarded to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children each year, it makes sense to concentrate on the illustrations of these award-winning books. Caldecott Award books are always in print. Every title is available in all public school and community libraries. Further, the prize winning books have both high quality texts and eye-catching illustrations for endless opportunities for vocabulary instruction.

Research for this unit will include:

- (1) an introduction to children's literature through picture books
- (2) implications for educators to utilize illustrations to teach new vocabulary
- (3) the history of the Caldecott Medal and criteria for selection
- (4) specific examples of the award-winning picture books and the suitability of using Caldecott Award Books in a kindergarten curriculum.

### *An Introduction to Children's Literature through Picture Books*

A picture book is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historic document; and foremost, an experience for a child. As an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning of the page. On its own terms its possibilities are limitless.

~Barbara Bader, children's literature critic

Although picture books as teaching instruments are pervasive today, picture books as a genre only developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and until the mid-1990s, functioned primarily as simple entertainment for children. Parents read them to their kids; children did not read

them on their own. The first picture book known to be designed for children was not published until 1658 when Johannes Amos Comenius wrote *The Visible World in Pictures*. It is illustrated by woodcuts and is thought to be a children's encyclopedia of sorts. John Newberry, in 1744, illustrated the earliest English version of a storybook called, *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, and was the first book to be marketed as pleasure reading. In 1866, John Tenniel illustrated Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and it remains one of the most successful entertainment books for children today.

Fairy tales with very few pictures were collected in the early part of the nineteenth century such as the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Anderson. Toy books were next in the latter part of the nineteenth century in which color illustrations constituted a larger proportion compared to text. At this point, Randolph Caldecott, along with other notables such as Walter Crane and Kate Greenaway, began to illustrate books of tremendous quality. In the twentieth century, picture books were generally eight to twelve pages of illustrations accompanying a classic children's storybook, such as Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. In the United States, illustrated stories for children were often featured in popular magazines like *Good Housekeeping* for mothers to read to their children.

In the early 1900's, the successful L. Frank Baum's *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* book series was published, and in 1920, Johnny Gruelle wrote and illustrated Raggedy Ann and Andy stories. At this point, picture books began to achieve a new status in literature. Indeed, in 1928, Wanda Gag's *Millions of Cats* became the first picture book to receive a Newberry Medal runner-up award. In recognition of the increased prominence of picture books, the Caldecott Medal was established in 1938, and Dorothy Lathrop became the first winner of the award for her illustrations in *Animals of the Bible*. Building on the momentum, Simon and Shuster began publishing Little Golden Books in 1942, which were bestsellers and became staples of the industry. Picture books had officially become an important genre in the world of children's literature.

As picture books became widely available, their substance morphed, and they began to function as both a source of entertainment and a means of educating. In response to an article in *New York Magazine* lamenting the lack of engaging children's reading primers, Dr. Seuss (Theodore Seuss Geisel) created *The Cat in the Hat* in 1957. He limited himself to a small set of words from an elementary school vocabulary list, and thus, the concept of utilizing picture books to teach reading was born. This concept, as well as Dr. Seuss himself, had an indisputable influence in the picture book industry. He established publishing company Beginner Books, and this venture was highly successful and dominated the children's picture book market of the 1960s.

Today, picture books are the principal format in which preschool and primary age children experience literature (Sipe, 1998). The assumption is that pictures communicate more naturally and directly than words, allowing young children to make sense of the accompanying texts (Nodelman). Notably, however, neither the words nor pictures could provide the full meaning of the story on their own. Rather, both elements—the text and

the sequence of illustrations—are equally important for teaching children the basics of literacy (Sipe, 1998).

### *Implications for Educators to Utilize Illustrations to Teach Vocabulary*

Picture books create many discussion topics, each of which requires young learners to draw upon their existing vocabulary and provide them with countless opportunities to learn new words and new uses of words. For early childhood educators, picture books provide an easy and interesting way for students to learn about each of the subjects taught in the classroom. It is the most basic cross-curricular medium to illustrate a wide variety of concepts in all areas of the core curriculum. Most importantly, picture books involve total language immersion (Moen, 1991).

As an initial observation, picture books make for excellent springboards from which teachers can impart beginning skills required for reading comprehension. Compare and contrast, main idea, character analysis, and story sequence are a few of the elements embodied in pictures books that foster language acquisition. These are the basic building blocks that the Pennsylvania State Standards require kindergarteners to master to achieve proficiency in reading. Picture books ease children into these often intimidating concepts.

Importantly, picture books lend themselves to cross-curricular use. For example, teachers can use Ezra Jack Keate's *The Snowy Day* as the basis for lessons in science and art, in addition to literacy. The story is about a little boy who discovers the simple joys of a snowy day, from making tracks in the snow to sliding down a hill. Keate's collage paintings and simple text express the universal wonder of waking up on a winter's morning to a newly laid snow (Chanko, 1990). Children enjoy the story, and teachers can use it to teach seasons, weather patterns, and changes in matter. The style of the illustrations are easy for children to replicate on their own, a fun art project that reinforces the story and the accompanying science lessons.

While parents may not initially think of using a picture book to teach a math skill, teachers can utilize the illustrations to engage young students in a way that will make math seem concrete, comprehensible, and useful. For instance, the core curriculum requires kindergarten students to acquire knowledge of patterns, shapes, colors, and textures. The vivid quilt fabric and acrylic designs on canvas in the book *Tar Beach*, for instance, feature repetitive geometric designs that allow for many opportunities to teach the attributes of shapes and patterns. Moreover, children enjoy creating art from all types of media, and by drawing parallels between shapes in illustrations in picture books and the children's own illustrations, the students can begin to recognize the shapes and patterns inherent in their own artwork.

Further, students can begin to learn basic artistic terminology. By looking at pictures, children begin to internalize visual assumptions that adults take for granted. For example, the concept of perspective within a scene - the idea that smaller things are farther away - did not emerge until the Renaissance (Noderman). Picture books introduce young

learners to that idea. The oil paintings in *Rapunzel* display large people in the foreground and small buildings in the upper corner, indicating that Rapunzel and her prince are far from his kingdom.

To understand a picture book, children must have knowledge of differing styles and their purposes and must be able to perform the complex operation of interpreting parts of pictures in various ways (Nodelman). By pointing out things as basic as the types of media with which the illustration was done, children are engaged. Brush strokes, black and white versus colorful drawings, and chalk suddenly contribute to the overall structure of the story. Discussions about patterns, shapes, and colors, and other artistic labels help to identify and focus on aspects of reality those students might otherwise ignore or gloss over (Sipe, 1998). *Kitten's First Moon* provides a ready example. The use of bold outlines of organic shapes and shades of black, white, and gray with rose undertones tells a story of a kitten who mistakes the moon for a bowl of milk. As the Caldecott reviewers note, "The moon, the flowers, the fireflies' lights and the kitten's eyes create a comforting circle motif, [while the] gouache and colored pencil illustrations project a varied page design that rhythmically paces the spare text" (Assn. for Library Service to Children). These observations also provide a means to build language skills because it forces teachers and students to focus on the process and content of the art ("Look at the way the illustrator experiments with tones") rather than merely stating the obvious ("What a great picture!").

All of these examples illustrate how picture books require children to make inferences. Deriving the tale requires an understanding and an articulation of the world as reflected within the book. When young children look at picture books, to understand them, they need to draw the assumptions that the artist and author have embedded in the picture. In this way, they are a significant means by which children are integrated into the theology of our culture (Nodelman). As Perry Nodelman points out, "Ideologies are not necessarily undesirable, and in the sense of a system of beliefs by which we make sense of the world, social life would be impossible without them." He provides an example: young children will scan a whole picture, giving equal attention to all parts rather than focusing immediately on the lone person in the center. This suggests that picking out and centering on the human in the middle of a picture is a learned activity that reinforces important cultural assumptions about the relative value of particular objects. More broadly, it teaches the general assumption that objects do indeed have different values and as such, do require different levels of attention (Noderman).

Indeed, picture books call on children to reflect on sequential elements and to draw on their individual experiences to fill in textual gaps. The opportunity is provided by picture books to develop higher level comprehension because the viewer must analyze, synthesize, and interpret the visual image (Goldstone, 1989). This ability to translate pictorial images into a storyline requires abstract thinking skills, and ultimately, thinking strategies are what the educational system seeks to promote (Goldstone, 1991).

## *The History and Criteria for Selection of the Caldecott Medal*

As described above, picture books can be an incredibly powerful tool for teaching literacy to young children. Each year, the most exceptional book of the genre is awarded the esteemed Caldecott Medal. The Caldecott Medal has been awarded annually since 1938 to the creator of the most distinguished American picture book for children published in the United States in that past year. Now, 73 years later, books that have won this prestigious honor are among the most celebrated children's books available, and the complete list of honorees serves as a "who's who" of an increasingly popular genre. Truly, Caldecott medal awardees are consistently of the highest caliber and the list of winners can be used by teachers to identify the picture books most worthy of presentation in their classrooms.

So what makes a picture book worthy of this distinction? Originally, the idea for the picture book award was proposed by Frederic G. Melcher in 1937 to incentivize the creation of very high quality children's books (Wikipedia, 2011). At that time, Melcher worked as the senior editor of *Publisher's Weekly* and was concerned that picture book artists were not being adequately honored as compared to authors of children's literature who were recognized by the Newbery Medal. At Melcher's suggestion, the award was created and named for the popular Victorian English illustrator Randolph Caldecott, whose prolific work helped define the genre.

In modern times, the Association for Library Services for Children (ALSC) has set the terms for consideration of a book saying that to be considered for the Caldecott Medal it must have excellent execution in the artistic technique employed and pictorial interpretation of story, theme, or concept. Further, it must have an appropriate style of illustration to the story, theme or concept. Its plot, theme, characters, setting, mood and/or information must be well delineated through the pictures, and finally, the book must have an excellence of presentation in recognition of a child audience (Assn. for Library Service to Children).

### *Examples of Caldecott Award Books*

Caldecott winners have a special power to bring stories to life. The art and the text build on each other to trigger children's imaginations and to tell a complete story. For beginning readers, the illustrations and text are used interchangeably to reinforce comprehension. Picture books vary widely. Many styles of illustrations and different media are used to tell the story. This unit looks at several archetypal categories within the Caldecott collection, including wordless books, fairy tales, real life experiences, and books notable for the story they tell through their artistic style.

Wordless books, by necessity, rely on the strength of the pictures and their artistic style to express complex storylines. For centuries, people have conveyed meaning through the use of visual images, without the support of written text. In fact, wordless books have become a distinct genre within the world of literature. Beginning readers can "read" them by studying the pictures and telling the story in their own words, which

strengthens a child's ability to understand what books mean. *Tuesday*, by David Wiesner, tells a story of what animals do while the world is asleep. The book depicts frogs soaring through the air on lily pads in the middle of the night. The lack of words challenges readers to fill in the story, sparking their imaginations and prompting questions aimed at the story's underlying meanings (Zingher, 2010).

Fairy tales are timeless classics. Their plots are often familiar to young readers, because the stories have been told over many generations. In *Rapunzel* and *Rumpelstiltskin*, Paul O. Zelinsky uses detailed oil paintings to place the story in a time many centuries ago. Zelinsky researched the history of the fairy tales, and he uses oil painting as a means to evoke their history and the Renaissance period in which they originated. Early readers may not have any prior knowledge of the Renaissance time period, but they can look at the style and know instantly that it depicts a time far from the present. This begins to build the cultural associations between pictures and abstract cultural references described earlier. A teacher can talk about the period's history, the clothing worn, and the architecture featured in the pictures, and after reading these books, children will appreciate that the style and attention to detail used by Zelinsky and other painters implies a temporal setting during the Renaissance era.

Picture books about real life experiences typically are not meant to convey historical narratives, but rather, are used to evoke childhood memories of an event, whether good or bad. The illustrations provide detail that allows the reader to relate and engage in the storyline without requiring many words. In this way, these types of picture books truly embody the saying that "a picture is worth a thousand words." In *Tar Beach*, Faith Ringgold translates her memories from childhood into a work of fiction about her family's traditions on hot summer nights. Bright, bold colors evoke feelings of happiness and contentedness, and the dichotomy between the blurry brushstrokes and harder edges around the characters imply the relative importance of the elements of scenes. The quilt patterns and acrylic designs on canvas provide a visual experience of traditional African material, evoking its history and culture, while the quilt itself brings the setting to America. Furthermore, *Tar Beach* allows teachers to discuss repetitive geometric designs without losing the attention of their class. It is an engaging story to which children can relate and simultaneously explore the myriad shapes and patterns on each page.

The illustrators' style and media selections can carry the plot farther than the words of the text. A number of classic children's books demonstrate the power that artistic choices have to subtly convey feelings and emotion and to set the plot's momentum. For example, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* uses the elements of the physical book to advance his story. By gradually shifting the proportion of the illustrations and text size relative to the white space on the book's pages, Sendak initially builds momentum and excitement. In the beginning of the story, the illustrations themselves are small, taking up only a fraction of a single page. As the story progresses, the text gets smaller and less prominent, and the illustrations gradually creep from a small box on one page onto the second page of each double page spread. By the climax, three full wordless pages of vivid colors are used to depict the main character, Max, as he becomes the "king of all the wild things" and leads his wild subjects in a wild rumpus. With few words,

Sendak plays on the interaction of pen and ink with watercolors with the page itself to capture the idea that children understand the yearning to travel to a distant land where the wild things are because it takes them away from the frustrations of everyday life. Then, Sendak gradually decreases the size of the illustrations, adding text and white space back to make the reader feel Max's boredom and longing for home. Sendak shows that escapism ultimately gives way to a desire to be in the comfort and familiarity of one's home, surrounded by those who love them. Kevin Henkes uses this same technique in *Kitten's First Full Moon* to show exploration of the unknown and the satisfaction of coming home.

As a collection, Caldecotts are rich with teaching opportunities. The books introduce students to a vast range of illustration styles, inspiring their own artistic growth. The pictures have a special power to bring stories to life and offer equally diverse possibilities for multilevel reading and writing activities. Children can discover new concepts and add words and meanings to their speaking vocabulary by listening and discussing the award books. Moreover, the kindergarten student will discover that reading provides both entertainment and information, while developing the desire to learn to read and write. They can develop phonemic awareness, such as the concepts of rhyme and repetition. They are learning more about the world and closely inspecting the detail in illustrations to gain knowledge of different worlds.

## **Objectives**

In alignment with the Pennsylvania Academic Standards, and the Philadelphia Core Curriculum Objectives, this unit will provide a literature-rich based program using Caldecott Award books. It is intended for students in a full day, self-contained kindergarten classroom. The principle objectives of the curriculum unit are: 1) to identify and examine selections from the Caldecott Award picture book collection, 2) to study information about the authors and illustrators and, 3) to provide language experiences that integrate reading, writing, speaking, math, and listening skills.

Specific objectives include: 1) kindergarten students will be able to identify different types of books and genres (e.g., real, make-believe, fiction/nonfiction, poetry, rhymes, fairy tales) by answering questions about stories read-aloud to recall key concepts of the text 2) students will be able to apply illustrations and portions of a story to infer and predict what happens next in a story as well as patterns and essential information by creating their own drawings and writings, and 3) students will be able to describe the characters, setting and main idea of a story by creating artwork or a written response that demonstrates comprehension.

The unit should be completed after the second marking period when students have developed basic concepts of print and can engage in and experiment in reading and writing. Lessons will feature selections of Caldecott Award picture books in multiple genres in order to analyze the sequence of the illustrations using vocabulary that illustrators, publishers, and designers of picture books use. Drawing is an important component of kindergarten writing. The Philadelphia Core Curriculum Guide for

Literacy suggests that drawings act as a placeholder that students use to hold their ideas in mind. Activities will consist of familiarizing the students with the Caldecott medal, reviewing the criteria for selection of this award, discussing the various media in picture book illustrations, comparing illustrators, and creating individual picture books. The culminating event will be a Book Award Ceremony equipped with podium, microphone, presenters, and of course, medals for favorite Caldecott Award Books.

## **Strategies**

Inspired by Caldecott books, the lessons found in this unit invite children to explore the artist in themselves as well as strategies that maintain fluency, detect and correct error when reading, and to problem-solve for new words. Each lesson is designed with reading strategies as outlined in the School District of Philadelphia Core Curriculum Guidebooks. Although there are four lessons featured in this unit, it is by no means all-inclusive. The first lesson actually lends itself to the idea of creating several mini-lessons by creating a Caldecott Award Book library in the classroom. Each time a student reads a story or a book is read to the class, a follow up writing experience is required for each student to place in an individualized folder. Furthermore, this opportunity for written reflection creates an assessment piece for each lesson.

Kindergarten teachers recognize that the best possible way to instruct comprehension is to teach *for* strategies. Each strategy is a set of connections provided by meaning, language structure and visual information. Of significance is how our students; the readers, access and use them. Comprehending is not a product of reading; it is a process. Any additional stories that are read present several further options for reading strategies. Each lesson will begin with a dialogue to activate prior knowledge about the lesson's topic. This will also serve as an introduction to the lesson. Every lesson includes one or more Caldecott Award books that are read aloud with the objective in mind.

Think Aloud/Modeling is a procedure in which the teacher demonstrates a literacy task as the students are observing exactly what the task involves. This gives the students a clear idea of what they will be expected to do independently. A picture walk; in which the teacher guides the students through the text by looking at and discussing the pictures before reading a story is important for assisting students as they make logical predictions about what the story is going to be about. This will guarantee the main objective of the unit is accomplished; that students understand that illustrations support the text by providing an additional resource for checking and confirming words and meaning in the text.

Webbing and Venn diagrams are graphic organizers that support both reading and writing comprehension. They are brainstorming techniques used for comparison and listing purposes and should be utilized whenever possible in storybook discussions. Finally, Cooperative Learning (turn to your partner, discuss at your table) provide opportunities for students to discuss content of the text.

## **Classroom Activities**

### Lesson One

Introduction to the Unit: What is a Caldecott Award Book?

#### *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Identify the award books by locating the Caldecott Medal on the covers of several picture books to display in the classroom “ Caldecott Corner”
- Differentiate the role of an author and an illustrator by listening to a story and observing the pictures
- Understand why the Caldecott Medal is given, how it is chosen and how different illustrators use different materials to create book illustrations
- Create a “Caldecott Award Book” folder to collect and organize unit activities.

#### *Content*

PA Standards

Literacy:

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently
  - E. Acquire basic reading vocabulary by identifying common words.
  - F. Recall new vocabulary in listening and visual contexts.
  - H. Demonstrate reading of keywords and selected sentences and recall key concepts of the text.
- 1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  - C. Identify different types of genre.
- 1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature
  - A. Respond to and discuss a variety of literature through Read-Alouds and Shared Reading.
  - B. Describe the characters, setting, and main idea of a story.
- 1.5 Quality of Writing
  - A. Write, draw or use pictures to depict experiences, stories, people, objects, or events.
  - B. Write words appropriate for a specific topic.
  - D. Use a variety of words in early forms of writing, dictation, or illustrations to express complete thoughts.
  - G. Present written work to small groups.
- 1.6 Speaking and Listening
  - B. Listen to a selection and share information and ideas.
- 1.7 Characteristics and Functions of the English Language
  - A. Recognize words from other languages as encountered.
  - B. Identify variations in dialogues.
- 1.8 Research
  - B. Locate information using visual representation and key words.
  - C. Identify important concepts related to the main ideas.

### *Materials*

Various selections of Caldecott Award Books, pencils, markers, folders (the two pocket kind for each student) plain drawing paper

### *Activity*

Create a reading corner in the classroom equipped with a small bookshelf or bins of several Caldecott award picture books and a bulletin board to display children's work. As an introduction to the unit, invite the students to sit in front of the display and explain that awards are given to people for doing well in something. Encourage students to provide examples of awards for sports, good attendance, test scores, good behavior, etc. (certificates, ribbons, and trophies) Explain that books can get awards too. A special award called the Caldecott Medal is given every year for the book with the best pictures.

Read the objective of the lesson to the students. Show the class several Caldecott Medal books. Provide a few details about the styles of illustrating. For example, *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats is illustrated by using the technique of collage. He finger-paints on large sheets of paper and then cuts out the shapes of the object he wants in his illustration and glues it on blank paper. All of his books are done using this technique. Other examples are Maurice Sendak's: *Where the Wild Things Are* in which the illustrations are pen and ink with watercolor and Faith Ringgold's *Tar Beach* incorporating quilt patterns and bright, bold acrylic geometric designs to capture its African history and culture.

Discuss the characteristics of award winning books and the challenges the judges have in selecting such an honor. Select a book from the display and read the title. Explain to students that as each picture book is read, an activity will follow. Distribute drawing paper. After a selection is read to the class, have children write the title at the top of the paper and then illustrate a favorite scene from the story. Children will keep their drawings and activities in the "Caldecott Award Books" folder. The children can write their name on the folder and design a medal for the cover as well.

### Lesson Two

#### A Wild Thing Bulletin Board Mural

### *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Analyze the visual images, themes, and ideas for illustration in the storybook *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak
- Identify the characteristics of the setting and characters
- Apply elements of art and principles of design using a variety of drawing materials to craft their own Wild Thing
- Evaluate their own art and provide meaning by sharing their wild thing with the class

## *Content*

### PA Standards

#### Literacy:

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently
  - E. Acquire basic reading vocabulary by identifying common words.
  - F. Recall new vocabulary in listening and visual contexts.
  - H. Demonstrate reading of keywords and selected sentences and recall key concepts of the text.
- 1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  - C. Identify different types of genre.
- 1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature
  - A. Respond to and discuss a variety of literature through Read-Alouds and Shared Reading.
  - B. Describe the characters, setting, and main idea of a story.
- 1.5 Quality of Writing
  - A. Write, draw or use pictures to depict experiences, stories, people, objects, or events.
  - B. Write words appropriate for a specific topic.
  - D. Use a variety of words in early forms of writing, dictation, or illustrations to express complete thoughts.
  - G. Present written work to small groups.
- 1.6 Speaking and Listening
  - B. Listen to a selection and share information and ideas.
- 1.7 Characteristics and Functions of the English Language
  - A. Recognize words from other languages as encountered.
  - B. Identify variations in dialogues.
- 1.8 Research
  - B. Locate information using visual representation and key words.
  - C. Identify important concepts related to the main ideas.

## *Materials*

Book *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak, construction paper, assorted markers, oil pastels or crayons, watercolor paints, scissors, roll of white paper or poster size white papers for the background mural

## *Activity*

Begin the activity by showing the cover of the book. Explain that artists use their imagination to create art. Art can be used as illustration to tell a story. Illustrators use a variety of materials to create their illustrations. Ask students what they think makes a good illustration. (Color, images, shapes...).

Read the story *Where the Wild Things Are*. During reading, discuss the different pictures that are drawn and speculate how they were made. What kind of materials? What kind of textures do you see? What makes the creatures look wild? Brainstorm ideas if students were to make wild things. Talk about claws, horns, feathers, scales, etc.

Model sketching a wild thing using a black marker as an outline. Apply the color markers to draw in patterns. Next, use oil pastels or crayons to add textures to the drawing all the while discussing the features and how to create texture. Students will then formulate their own wild thing.

The next step is to cut out the wild things and using watercolors, do a paint wash over the wild thing. As the creatures are drying, the class can together create the background on the white paper using pastels and paint. The background is placed on a bulletin board and the wild things are stuck to the background and displayed under the heading “The Wild Things are Here!” As a follow-up lesson, the students will write a brief summary of the main characters and events in the story using sentences and/or drawings to place in their Caldecott Award Folder.

### Lesson Three

#### A Snowy Day Collage

##### *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Identify differences among media, techniques and processes used in the visual arts; particularly in Caldecott Award Books
- Discover a variety of possibilities for creating collages in artworks
- Compare and Contrast the expressive qualities in nature with those found in the story *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats
- Create a collage that conveys personal experiences

##### *Content*

##### PA Standards

##### Literacy:

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently
  - D. Use self-monitoring comprehension strategies.
  - E. Acquire basic reading vocabulary by identifying common words.
- 1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  - C. Identify different types of genre
- 1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature
  - A. Respond to and discuss a variety of literature through Read-Alouds and Shared Reading.
  - B. Describe the characters, setting, and main idea of a story.
- 1.4 Writing
  - B. Draw or write to inform.
- 1.5 Quality of Writing
  - A. Write, draw or use pictures to depict experiences, stories, people, objects, or events.
  - B. Write words appropriate for a specific topic.
  - D. Use a variety of words in early forms of writing, dictation, or illustrations to express complete thoughts.
  - G. Present written work to small groups.

Science:

- 3.5.4: Earth Sciences
  - C: Know basic weather elements.
- 3.1.4: Unifying Themes
  - B: Know models as useful simplifications of objects or processes.
  - C: Illustrate patterns that regularly occur and reoccur in nature.
  - E: Recognize change in natural and physical systems.

*Materials*

*The Snowy day* by Ezra Jack Keats, newspaper, assorted collage materials (such as paper of various textures, foil, cotton balls, string, ribbons, pebbles, shells), cardboard or poster board (for background), white glue or paste for heavier objects, paint, paintbrushes, toothbrushes (for splattering paint)

*Activity*

Show the book *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats and point out the Caldecott Medal on the cover. Before reading, ask the students why they think this book won the award. What should the book include by thinking of its title? Explain that Mr. Keats used the technique of collage with this book, as well as his other books (if possible, show other examples of his books). Collage is an art form that appeals to young children. There are a limitless range of textures inviting the tactile experiences that young children thrive on.

Read the story, allowing the students to have enough time to look at the illustrations. After the reading, go back to the colorful pages and discuss what materials the students think Mr. Keats used to complete his illustrations. Can the children guess how the illustrator made the gray background on pages where Peter is sleeping? (Ink splattered with a toothbrush) The snowflakes? (Patterns cut from gum erasers) Talk about what should be included in an illustration for a snowy day. What would the students like to see? What would they include?

Have children cover work areas with newspaper and gather materials for their collages. Using collage materials, have the students depict either their favorite picture from the book or design their own pictures using only these materials. No drawing allowed! Creativity should be coming from the materials themselves. Encourage them to arrange materials on their backgrounds a little at a time, gluing them in place when they're satisfied with the look, then adding paint if they wish.

As a closing activity, the students will compare and contrast the setting of the story to their own experiences of waking up to a snowy morning outside their window by writing a few sentences to include in their folder.

Lesson Four

Favorite Author Medal of Honor and Book Award Ceremony

*Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Classify and Categorize books of various authors/illustrators
- Identify their favorite illustrator/author by evaluating and reflecting upon the books they have read
- Observe and synthesize themes and patterns in various books
- Describe those themes and patterns through drawing and writing
- Create a Medal of Honor to place on their favorite book
- Participate in an awards ceremony to present their favorite book with a Medal of Honor

### *Content*

#### PA Standards

#### Literacy:

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently
  - D. Use self-monitoring comprehension strategies.
  - E. Acquire basic reading vocabulary by identifying common words.
- 1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  - C. Identify different types of genre
- 1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature
  - A. Respond to and discuss a variety of literature through Read-Alouds and Shared Reading.
  - B. Describe the characters, setting, and main idea of a story.
- 1.4 Writing
  - B. Draw or write to inform.
- 1.5 Quality of Writing
  - A. Write, draw or use pictures to depict experiences, stories, people, objects, or events.
  - B. Write words appropriate for a specific topic.
  - D. Use a variety of words in early forms of writing, dictation, or illustrations to express complete thoughts.
  - G. Present written work to small groups.

### *Materials*

Various Caldecott books (try to have at least three books by the same author with at least one of them a Caldecott Award book), baskets or containers for the collected books, author's names on index cards for sorting, chart paper, colored markers, tape and plastic container lids or round paper coasters for awards. Optional materials: small red carpet, microphone, podium for oral presentations of award

### *Activity*

This is the culminating activity and is projected to take approximately two days. Invite the children to the Caldecott Corner and display the baskets. Label each container or basket with the names of the illustrators. Read the names aloud together and discuss the attributes of each illustrator. List the attributes of each on chart paper.

Next, sort the books by author/illustrator. Remind the students that of the thousands of new children's books published every year, only one wins the Caldecott Medal. If the

children were on the committee to select the recipient of this award, what are some of the qualities they would look for? List all suggestions on chart paper.

Encourage children to design and name their own award for favorite book of the year. Make a list of students' suggestions for the award name (examples are Best Illustrations, Funniest, Best Lesson Learned, Favorite Mixed-Up Fairy Tale and Best Hero). Children can nominate a book for their award and place it in a container of nominated books. Using the materials provided, the students can work in small groups at their tables to design and create a medal or seal for their favorite book. It is always a good idea to make one so that the children can visualize the end result. Explain that each student will present the award the following day in front of the class on the red carpet using a microphone. Students are to give reasons for choosing the book for the award.

Finally, hold a Book Award Ceremony. Try to make this exciting and authentic by providing a podium, red carpet and a fancy microphone. If possible, play award show music and "host" the ceremony by calling one presenter at a time to the podium to announce "And the winner is..." Each child should explain their award and tape it on the honored book.

After the presentations, cupcakes and juice are served to honor the presenters.

### **Teacher Bibliography**

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Chamberlain, Julia and Dorothy Leal. "Caldecott medal books and readability levels: Not just 'picture books.'" *The Reading Teacher*, vol. 52, no. 8 (May 1999).

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Chanko, Pamela. *Teaching with Favorite Ezra Jack Keats Books*. New York. Scholastic, 2005.

Engaging, skill-building activities that help kids learn about families, friendship, neighborhood and community, and more in these beloved classics.

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"History of Picture Books." *Old Picture Books*. 2008-2010.  
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Describes the history of picture books.

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Provides an introduction to some of the critical theories useful in the study of children's literature.

"Illustration." Wikipedia. Updated March 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illustration>.  
Provides a background on illustrations.

Moen, Christine Boardman. *Teaching with Caldecott Books: Activities across the Curriculum, Teaching Strategies*. Jefferson City, MO. Scholastic, 1991.  
Employs a whole language-critical thinking approach to teaching reading, writing, listening, and thinking using the Caldecott books as the literature base.

Sipes, Lawrence. "Researching the language of picture books." *Journal of Children's Literature*, vol. 24, no. 2. Fall 1998.  
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Zinger, Gary. "Fantastic, Puzzling Images." *School Library Monthly*, vol. 26, nbr. 2610. June 2010.  
Certain illustrations in children's books can be so beguiling, haunting, or startling that they deserve to be looked at individually - outside of the story's context. In fact, some convey such a strong mood that they can transport children to curious dream-like worlds and stimulate their thoughts to spin wildly. They offer a spectrum of possibilities that challenge kids to be interpretive, observant, and questioning.

## **Student Bibliography**

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Provides fun cross-curricular art activities.

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Caldecott award story about a kitten who thinks the moon is a bowl of milk.

Keats, Ezra Jack. *The Snowy Day*. New York. Viking Press, 1962.  
Tells the story of a boy on a snowy day.

Ringgold, Faith. *Tar Beach*. New York. Crown Publishers, 1991.  
Beautifully illustrated caldecott award book of a girl's summer nights with her family in Harlem.

Sendak, Maurice. *Where the Wild Things Are*. Harper Collins, 1963.  
A book about Max who goes off to become the king of the wild things.

Shulevitz, Uri. *Writing With Pictures: How to Write and Illustrate Children's Books*. New York. Watson-Guptill, 1991.  
Shulevitz, a well-established children's author and illustrator, uses discussion and more than 600 illustrations to convey principles he follows in his work.

Wiesner, David. *Tuesday*. New York. Clarion Books, 1991.  
Wordless book about flying frogs.

Zelinsky, Paul O. *Rapunzel*. New York. Dutton Children's Books, 1997.  
Beautifully illustrated classic fairy tale.

Zelinsky, Paul O. *Rumpelstiltskin*. New York. Puffin Books, 1996.  
Beautifully illustrated classic fairy tale.

## **Appendix/ Content Standards**

### Pennsylvania Academic Standards

#### *Literacy*

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently
  - C. Apply knowledge of the structural features of spoken and written language and the use of picture and content clues to derive meaning from text.
  - D. Use self-monitoring comprehension strategies.
  - E. Acquire basic reading vocabulary by identifying common words.
  - F. Recall new vocabulary in listening and visual contexts.
  - H. Demonstrate reading of keywords and selected sentences and recall key concepts of the text.
- 1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  - C. Identify different types of genre.
- 1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature
  - A. Respond to and discuss a variety of literature through Read-Alouds and Shared Reading.
  - B. Describe the characters, setting, and main idea of a story.
- 1.4 Types of Writing
  - A. Use early forms of writing, dictations or illustrations to express ideas.
  - B. Draw or write to inform.
  - C. Use illustrations to state an opinion

- 1.5 Quality of Writing
  - A. Write, draw or use pictures to depict experiences, stories, people, objects, or events.
  - B. Write words appropriate for a specific topic.
  - C. Organize words into a complete sentence.
  - D. Use a variety of words in early forms of writing, dictation or illustration to express complete thoughts.
  - E. Revise early forms of writing or illustrations to order story elements or add details.
  - G. Present written work to small groups.
- 1.6 Speaking and Listening
  - B. Listen to a selection and share information and ideas.
- 1.7 Characteristics and Functions of the English Language
  - A. Recognize words from other languages as encountered.
  - B. Identify variations in dialogues.
- 1.8 Research
  - B. Locate information using visual representation and key words.
  - C. Identify important concepts related to the main ideas.

*Science*

- 3.5.4: Earth Sciences
  - C: Know basic weather elements.
- 3.1.4: Unifying Themes
  - B: Know models as useful simplifications of objects or processes.
  - C: Illustrate patterns that regularly occur and reoccur in nature.
  - E: Recognize change in natural and physical systems.