

Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words: The Value of Picture Books

by Rynette R. Kjesbo, M.S., CCC-SLP

You've probably read many stories without pictures, but have you ever read a story written in pictures? Illustrated books often have pictures that accompany the printed words that make up the stories. The pictures usually enhance the story and can help the reader to visualize the characters, setting, and action in a story. But a picture book tells its narrative mainly through a series of pictures, with words used only to share information not contained in the pictures. Some picture books, known as "Wordless Picture Books," even tell stories without using any words at all!



Are Picture Books Important?

If picture books primarily use pictures to tell their stories, are they really helpful for developing reading skills? Yes! Besides using colorful illustrations to engage and motivate readers to read, picture books can help even the youngest readers and non-readers learn foundational reading skills such as:



- **Concepts of Print** – how to hold a book, when to turn the page, reading from top to bottom and left to right, and understanding that printed words have meaning



- **Letter Knowledge** – recognizing the letters of the alphabet, knowing the difference in capital and lowercase letters, associating sounds to their matching letters



- **Phonemic Awareness** – understanding that sentences are made up of words, words are made up of syllables, and syllables are made up of sounds



Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students
(cont.)

How Can I Use Picture Books?

Picture books are helpful in many ways! They can help develop language skills, build social-emotional competence, improve a child's ability to listen, and so much more. Specific skills that you can use picture books to address include:



- **Answering questions** – Ask your child questions about what is happening in the pictures. Questions such as “Who is this?” “Where are they?” and “What is happening?” can help a child focus on the details of a story.



- **Telling and retelling stories** – Ask students to look at the pictures and tell you the story in their own words. Encourage your child to tell a complete story with a beginning, middle, and end. Once you have read the story together, asking your child to retell the story will help you to know how much of the story your child understood.



- **Exploring emotions and feelings** – Sometimes children find it easier to talk about other people's emotions instead of their own. Talk to your child about the emotions and feelings of the characters. This will also help your child develop empathy and an understanding of situations from another person's point of view.



- **Developing critical thinking skills** – Use pictures to predict what might happen next in the story. Ask your child which details in the picture helped him to make his prediction.



- **Engaging in conversation** – Talk about what is happening in a story. When possible, try to relate relevant parts of the story to your child's experiences.



- **Describing elements in a story** – Talk about the characters and the setting in which the story takes place. This will help your child to think more in depth about the story.



- **Listening** – Encourage your child to listen and follow along as you read to him.



- **Improving vocabulary** – Because picture books rely on pictures to tell their stories, the vocabulary that the authors use is often specific and focused. When a child comes across a vocabulary word that he doesn't know, encourage him to use the pictures and context to try to figure out the meaning of new words.

While many people may think that picture books can't contribute much to reading because of they don't contain lots of words, they actually provide a wealth of opportunities for growth and development in the area of reading! In the case of picture books, a picture really is worth a thousand words!

Resources:

“How Picture Books Play a Role in a Child's Development,” accessed June 25, 2018, <https://www.thechildrensbookreview.com/weblog/2010/11/how-picture-books-play-a-role-in-a-child%E2%80%99s-development.html>

“5 Pre-Reading Skills Kids Need To Be Successful Readers,” accessed June 25, 2018, <https://abcssofliteracy.com/pre-reading-skills-successful-readers/>

For more FREE Handy Handouts®, go to www.handyhandouts.com