

Wordless Picture Books

By Kathryn Tatnall, Youth Services Librarian

Did you know that sharing a wordless picture book can be a powerful way to build important literacy skills? Wordless picture books are books without text that rely solely on the pictures to convey the story. They are often dismissed as being too easy for any age reader. But they are outstanding tools to promote comprehension, vocabulary, listening skills, and they aid in the understanding of character development and story structure.

A good reader needs good comprehension skills. They need to remember what has already happened and be able to predict what may happen next. Wordless picture books are great for encouraging a child's ability to infer what happens in the story.

Confidence and independent reading are two other important hallmarks of good readers. This type of picture book can strengthen independence, particularly in young readers. Children feel a sense of pride at being able to read on their own and this builds confidence.

Wordless picture books invite the reader to participate in the story, in a very different way than a book with text. They encourage the reader to tell the story through the clues found in the pictures. This can lead to discussion on cause and effect and conflict resolution. Adding dialogue and elaborating on what is happening means using your imagination by thinking of ways to tell the story on each new reading of the book.

Storytelling skills can be built using wordless picture books. Storytelling is an excellent way to increase vocabulary and verbal skills. Thinking about the illustrations, the plot, and the character and their actions will lead to using new words and more complex words. Readers will naturally use these words in their daily language as they understand their context. Retelling also allows a child to understand the sequence of events particularly the beginning, middle, and end of a story. Allowing the child to focus on how the events of the story happen in an order that affects the plot's outcome.

Here are a few of my favorite picture books. *I Walk with Vanessa* by Keascoet, is a simply beautiful story of how a group of children deal with a bully who targets the new girl. *The Egg* by Geraldo Velerio is bold and bright and an absolutely unexpected story of how families come in all shapes and sizes. *One Afternoon* by Sun Hsin-Yu explores the life of a boy and his dog during one afternoon. Authors with more than one wordless books in our collection include; Suzy Lee, David Wiesner, Aaron Becker, and Barbara Lehman. And last but not least is one of my favorites, Jerry Pinkney's *The Lion and the*

Mouse. This is the old parable of the mighty lion that gets a splinter and the brave mouse that helps him out. Pinkney won the 2010 Caldecott Medal for some of the most beautiful illustrations I have ever seen. And that is the last point in the value of wordless books, they are some of the most interesting and beautiful illustrations that convey emotions, details, and art in a story.

Please ask at the Children's desk if there is something you're looking for and can't find right away; we're here to help. Check out our monthly calendar of programming too. We offer a variety of activities for all ages, from story time to book club for teens. You can find more information on our website at www.newulmlibrary.org on the Library Events page.

The library is located at 17 N. Broadway and is open to the public Monday to Thursday 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. The library will be closed on Monday, January 20 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.