

Picture Books Across Time

Illustrations are what make picture books so unique. The visions of the author and illustrator are put onto paper for the reader to gain insight on their thoughts while writing a particular story. Illustrations are what pique children's interest towards books and motivates them to want to learn how to read the words to go along with the illustrations. After analyzing picture books from before 1970 through today, it is interesting to notice how picture books have changed and how they have stayed the same.

There are many ways that picture books have stayed the same throughout the years. One thing that has stayed the same is the illustrators need to use a variety of picture styles. For example, in Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak the author uses not only cut-out pictures but also, full page spreads and pictures with white borders. This causes the reader to stay interested in the illustrations because they are constantly changing and appealing to the eye. Where the Wild Things Are also has what is called a full bleeding page, which is where the picture goes from corner to corner of the pages. The idea of using a variety of pictures throughout the story has not changed throughout the past 60 years. This is true from the 1970s to the 1990s where picture books like Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Worst also have cut-out pictures, full page spreads, bleeding pages and pictures with white borders. This constant from before the 1970s and then into the 90s shows that readers like a variety of picture styles and it is beneficial for illustrators to continue to do this. With that said, illustrators still find it appealing to do a variety of picture styles through today with picture books such as, The Emperor's Old Clothes by Kathryn Lasky. In the Emperor's Old Clothes, the illustrator chose to continue with the idea of using a variety of picture styles by using full

bleeding pages, full page spreads, cut-out pictures and pictures with white borders. This continues the trend that readers are attracted to a variety of picture styles and illustrators are going to keep doing this in the future.

Even though there are similarities in picture books throughout the decades, there are also differences between them. One element that has changed over the years is the type of finishing on the illustrations. Before the 1970s almost all (if not all) illustrations had a matted finish. This matted finish made the illustrations look dull. For example, The Little Engine that Could by Watty Piper has matted illustrations. The illustrations do not pop out as much as pictures with a glossy finish. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s books seem to be in a transitional period from the matted finish to the glossy finish. This transition can be seen while comparing a few picture books. In 1977, Miss Nelson is Missing by James Marshall and in 1980, Grandmama's Surprise by Eloise Greenfield were both published using matted illustrations. However, by 1985, Chris Van Allsburg's The Polar Express was published using glossy illustrations. The assumption being that during the 1970s and 1980s the glossy illustrations may have become easier and cheaper to publish than they had been earlier. Since the glossy appearance is so much more appealing it is no wonder that after the 1990s most books have illustrations with a glossy finish. This is seen through picture books like Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes by Eric Litwin and The Gingerbread Pirates by Kristin Kladstrup. This high demand for glossy finish illustrations may be due to the fact that children are used to seeing things digitally now (on their iPads, television, computers, etc.) that in order to keep books exciting for young children the illustrations must remain vibrant and colorful. This is a difficult task to achieve with a matted finish and therefore it seems that is the reason most picture books now have a glossy finish to them.

Along with the finishing (matted or glossy), another difference over the decades amongst picture books is the simplicity of the pictures. For example, in Harold and the Purple Crayon by Crockett Johnson and The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein there is only one color that was used to draw all of the pictures. In Harold and the Purple Crayon only purple was used and in The Giving Tree only black was used. However, this simplicity in the illustrations would change during the 1970s and 1980s and would continue through today. Again, I think illustrators moved away from the simple illustrations to the more vibrant and busy looking illustrations because of what children are used to seeing. Also, since everything is digital now, children would not be as interested in the simplistic illustrations, thus the reason it seems that illustrators have moved away from the one color, simple illustrations.

Although there are differences in illustrations between the decades, there are still similarities. Another similarity amongst picture books throughout the decades is the use of color. Even as early as 1965 in the book, The Worldly Pig by Bill Peet there was color in the pictures. This trend continues through the 1970s with Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs by Judi Barrett. The colored pictures in these stories may not have the vibrant coloring that is used today like in Marsupial Sue by Jack E. Davis and One Hundred Hungry Ants by Elinor J. Pinczes. However, they were still in color demonstrating that even 60 years ago it was exciting for readers to see the illustrations in color.

In conclusion, illustrations in picture books have changed a lot over the decades. The pictures have become more vibrant and more appealing to look at to young readers in a digital world. However, with all of the changes that have been made to the illustrations there are still aspects of them that stay the same. For example, the use of a variety of picture styles has

remained a popular trend amongst illustrators. Again, this is due to the fact that it is more appealing for the reader to look at if there are a variety of picture styles throughout the pages. Therefore, along with the vibrant and glossy illustrations of today with a variety of picture styles it is hard for a reader to put down a picture book.

Bibliography

Before 1970:

- The Little Engine that Could
 - Author/Illustrator: Piper, Watty
 - Published: 1930
- Harold and the Purple Crayon
 - Author/Illustrator: Crockett Johnson
 - Published: 1955
- Where the Wild Things Are
 - Author/Illustrator: Sendak, Maurice
 - Published: 1963
- The Giving Tree
 - Author/Illustrator: Silverstein, Shel
 - Published: 1964
- Chester the Worldly Pig
 - Author/Illustrator: Peet, Bill
 - Published: 1965

1970-1990:

- Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day
 - Author: Viorst, Judith
 - Illustrator: Cruz, Ray
 - Published: 1972
- Miss Nelson is Missing
 - Author: Allard, Harry
 - Illustrator: Marshall, James
 - Published: 1977
- Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs
 - Author: Barrett, Judi
 - Illustrator: Barret, Ron
 - Published: 1978
- Grandmama's Joy
 - Author: Greenfield, Eloise
 - Illustrator: Byard, Carole
 - Published: 1980
- The Polar Express
 - Author/Illustrator: Van Allsburg, Chris
 - Published: 1985

After 1990:

- One Hundred Hungry Ants
 - Author: Pinczes, Elinor J.
 - Illustrator: Mackain, Bonnie
 - Published: 1993
- The Emperor's Old Clothes
 - Author: Lasky, Kathryn

- Illustrator: Catrow, David
 - Published: 1999
- Marsupial Sue
 - Author: Lithgow, John
 - Illustrator: Davis, Jack E.
 - Published: 2001
- The Gingerbread Pirates
 - Author: Kladstrup, Kristin
 - Illustrator: Tavares, Matt
 - Published: 2009
- Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes
 - Author: Litwin, Eric
 - Illustrator: Dean, James
 - Published: 2011