

READING CONTEMPORARY PICTUREBOOKS

Picturing text

DAVID LEWIS



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Figure 1 From *Gorilla* by Anthony Browne.

another. All of them, for example, exhibit some degree of narrative illustration, but it is the ways in which the other award winners differ from Browne's book that makes the exercise of comparison so interesting. *Granpa*, for example, is another title that has become very popular, especially with students of the picturebook, but it achieves its effects in quite a different manner from our first example. Instead of the plain narrative voice that we find in *Gorilla*, *Granpa* has no narration at all, the written text consisting of decontextualized fragments of conversation, the voices of the little girl and her Granpa distinguished only by the typeface. The pictures help to integrate these snatches of talk, for Burningham is very skilful at using his images for different purposes and investing them with different kinds of meaning.

In a development of a technique first tried out in *Mr Gumpy's Outing* and then in *Come Away From the Water, Shirley*, Burningham gives his monochrome line drawings and his coloured illustrations different functions. Each

WHAT MAKES THE CHILDREN'S PICTUREBOOK SO INNOVATIVE? WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR READING WHEN TEXT IS PICTURED?

Reading Contemporary Picturebooks takes a close look at one of the most vibrant and exciting branches of children's literature – the modern picturebook. There has been an enormous increase in the quantity of high quality picturebooks published for children, yet our understanding of what it means to be visually literate and our knowledge of how readers negotiate such composite texts is limited. This book takes a sample of contemporary picturebooks and examines the features that make them unique, suggesting ways of studying and understanding the form.

Issues addressed include:

- the interaction of word and image in picturebooks
- the ecology of the picturebook
- the picturebook as process
- picturebooks at play
- postmodernism and the picturebook
- studying and understanding picturebooks

Reading Contemporary Picturebooks is both an introduction to a fascinating and innovative branch of children's literature and a detailed examination of how picturebooks work.

This book will be of interest to students, teachers and researchers interested in reading, children's literature and media studies.

David Lewis is one of the leading British specialists on picturebooks. He was formerly Lecturer in Primary Education at the University of Exeter

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