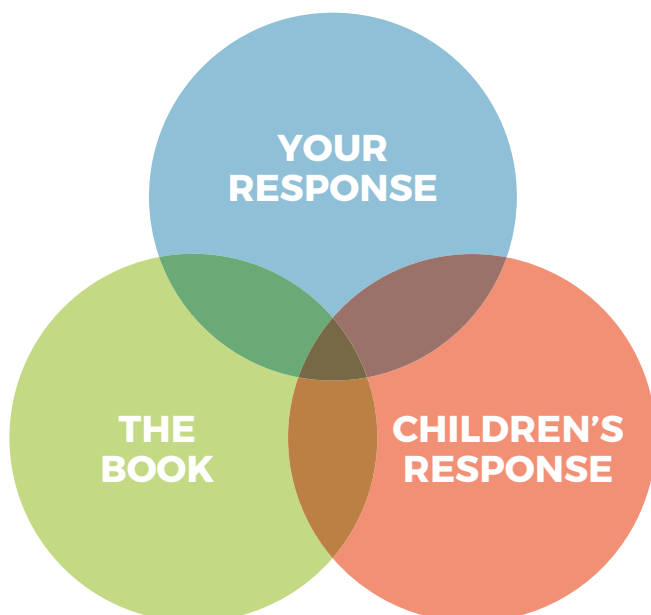




There are many things to take into account when selecting a picturebook. Such decisions become even more important when we are working in challenging environments and with limited resources and training available. The diagram below is a helpful way of considering some of the ways in which you can select a book. These criteria are not definitive and we hope you will take this opportunity to engage with our guidelines and share your feedback with us. Together, we can learn from each other's experiences and share good practice!

If you plan to use a specific book with your group of young people and their communities, you might look at the following three elements: your own response to the book, the book itself and what it can offer, as well as the children's responses. Please note that when we refer to "books" we are taking into account children's literature, and, more specifically, picturebooks. In our research, we have discovered a great potential in this category of "books" and we have found that picturebooks, in particular, have great potential to engage different groups of readers/viewers by creating safe spaces for discovery, reflection, hope and care for oneself and the others.



YOUR RESPONSE

- What was your emotional and intellectual reaction to the book? Did it entertain you? Did you find it funny? Did it attract your attention? Does it make you reflect on the story being told? Does it invite you to think about the themes, topics and experiences shared in the book from multiple angles?
- Try to work with books that you have a positive reaction towards, but always be prepared to open your mind and hear about how others have reacted to it. A challenging book that addresses sensitive topics (e.g., the pain of leaving one's home) could be used with care if the goal you're working towards is to create a positive environment where readers/viewers can share their ideas and experiences in a safe manner and with respect towards each other.

THE BOOK

- Engage with books that have the potential to promote human flourishing: moral growth; space for the child to be respected and voice their ideas; creative engagement.
- Select books that surprise the reader: they address an issue/theme/idea/situation that is of significance to the readers'/viewers, they build momentum and capture attention.
- Consider the authors and illustrators of the book: What can I find out about the author and illustrator and their perspectives (through websites, interviews, social media)? Is there a message they are trying to convey through this book? Does it promote human flourishing?
- Stylistics: Is the message of the book rendered aesthetically rather than in a direct, didactic manner? Select books that engage the readers'/viewers at multiple levels: via words, but also illustrations and photographs.
- Space: What spaces are shown? How is space used? Is the locality present? Are these spaces familiar or strange to children? What type of responses do these spaces call for?
- Power relationships: Does the book represent power relationships between child and adult, migrant and host; different forms of privilege and/or vulnerability?
- Representation: Is there a problem with these representations? Are there diverse characters present? What roles and relationships (e.g., friendship, intergenerational relationships) are shown? Do these representations expand or limit conversations and responses to the book?



- Is the child represented respectfully? How are emotions played out? Does the character have a clear voice? Does the book provide a balanced view and avoids victimizing characters and/or challenging situations?
- Select books that provide narratives with multiple layers and complexity that enable rich discussions among readers/viewers.

THE CHILDREN

- What would children benefit from engaging with the book? It may be useful to train yourself to work with the illustrations before turning to the words.
- Does the book contain spaces of interactivity? Are the children invited to engage with the images in the book and the narrative represented?
- Does the book surprise young readers/viewers? Does it provide them something that would encourage them to explore their worlds and ideas in a positive manner?
- Choose for the child and not for yourself. Use the book for building a safe space around the child and the process of engaging with the book.
- Build upon and trust in your knowledge of the children but prepare yourself to be surprised by their reactions. Respect their opinions and encourage them to voice these within a safe space that cares for the well-being of everyone involved with the book.
- Use your knowledge and observations of children's reactions to the same book from past readings. This will prepare you to anticipate children's reactions and to respond to them appropriately.