



## RATIONALE

In a picturebook, the pictures contain just as much information as the words do, so it is very useful to spend time looking closely at the pictures before using a book with children. You can then direct the children to explore very carefully the visuals in the book and engage with the narrative without turning immediately to the printed text. This strategy gives young readers who may not be comfortable with the print mode the opportunity to explore a book through other modes than the printed text.

## ADVICE FROM MEDIATORS

The walk and talk and annotation activities are good ways to explore the visuals in a picturebook. There are several ways to look more closely at the visuals:

1. Pay attention to what we call the **non-verbal communication** of the characters. Look at
  - The facial expressions of the characters: Are they happy, sad, worried?
  - The gaze: Look at the eyes and follow their direction. This is called the gaze and it is an important visual element to look for in a book because it can tell you more about the relationships between characters. The orientation of the gaze can also help you establish a connection with the book. The character may look at you and in this exchange there is a sense of closeness between the reader/viewer and the character(s). Consider these questions: Is the character looking at you or away from you? Are they making eye contact with another person? What do these visual exchanges suggest?
  - The posture of the characters: Are they standing straight up? Are they bent over? What does posture tell you about what the characters may be feeling or thinking about?
  - Clothing and appearance can tell you a lot about where the story may be set in terms of time and geography.
2. **The affective dimension:** What do you think of the pictures, what kind of reactions do you have? Which ones do you like and why? Which ones do you not like and why? What types of feelings are you invited to experience by engaging with the book?

3. The **compositional dimension:** Look at the actions, events and concepts being relayed via the images? Are any of these symbolic? How are the objects and people arranged in the visuals in relation to each other? Do these relationships convey meanings? What colours are used in the picture, do these add meaning?
4. The **critical dimension** is connected to asking questions about how elements like power, diversity and gender are represented in the text? Who is included and who is excluded? Who looks friendly and who looks angry? How do the compositional factors influence these criteria?

## TAKING NOTES OF THE CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

Looking closely at the visuals in a book is something that children enjoy doing because their eyes and imagination can wander along with the story. The challenging aspect may be to keep their attention to as many visual details as possible before jumping into meaning. The tendency to analyse can often take over the opportunity to spend more time with the visual elements of the book. Even if some responses from the children may not be in line with the story, acknowledge these visual encounters and guide them to explore other details that would give them a fuller picture of the book.

