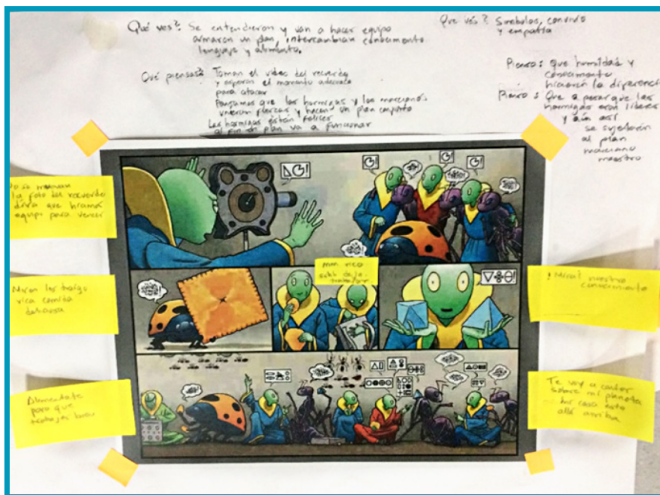




RATIONALE

Picturebooks without words, where the images carry the weight of the narrative, are known as 'wordless' or 'silent' picturebooks. Without words that might present a barrier to young children or even adults, they encourage those who may feel uncomfortable with the printed word to approach a book. They are hospitable texts, ideal for sharing not only in multilingual groups or groups where there is a range of reading and/or language levels but also where there is a range of ages. The sequenced images invite readers to put their own words to the story and, because there are no right or wrong interpretations, everyone can become a co-author. Thus, wordless picturebooks promote active participation, discussion, language learning, storytelling skills and the co-construction of meaning. They also offer opportunities for talking about images and the ways in which illustrators use visual elements, such as colour, frames, perspective to tell a story. In addition, they can also be useful for inviting participants to respond to the story in different forms, from dramatic performance to writing.



ADVICE FOR MEDIATORS

- There is usually a lot going on in the images of a wordless picturebook, so make sure participants are given plenty of time to look at the book and look again and again if they want to.
- Don't ask participants to try and re-tell the story too soon, instead, provide lots of opportunities to discuss their inferences and impressions of the book and make sure everyone feels their version of the story is valued.
- Instead of "Walking and talking" through the book, show them each page without saying anything but be open to comments if someone wants to say something, point out a detail or ask a question. At the end, ask participants to think of a word that sums up the book.
- Remember to focus on the pictures and think about how visual elements can also be used to tell stories.
- Try telling the story using sounds, noises or even songs and music, you can start this off or ask participants to help you with this or ask them to do it as a form of re-telling the story.
- The story can also be told or accompanied by dramatic action, using body movements and gestures.
- Create a list of words, perhaps in different languages, to describe the objects or the characters in the images.
- Encourage participants to add speech or thought bubbles to the images (see the Annotation activity).
- Audiotape the stories participants tell about the books and share these. The recordings can also be done to compare the stories told after each reading or to help in writing the stories down.
- Write the story down collectively, make sure everyone feels they have something valuable to contribute to the collective story: a word, a feeling, a memory.



TAKING NOTES OF THE CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

Both children and adults, including mediators themselves, are often surprised when they see a book without words for the first time and they are puzzled as to how these books can be 'read'. Some may even doubt that they offer anything of 'benefit', especially for older children. Therefore, it is important to take the opportunity to talk about the role of words and pictures in a story and perhaps also about the images and symbols we see all around us and how we interpret them. Mediators are also often surprised by concentration that can occur during the reading of a wordless picturebook as participants work to make sense of the story; this is why plenty of time must be allowed for further reading and looking. Children who have read wordless picturebooks often makes comments such as, 'it makes you think more', 'you have to use your imagination more' or 'you have to make up your own words/story'. By taking notes on how the stories that children and other participants tell after several encounters with the same wordless picturebook over time, mediators may be able to observe how language and storytelling skills have increased.

CREDIT AND FURTHER READING

Special thanks to Nora Obregon for her comments and advice.

Some of the advice and activities have been adapted from these three sources in English which are recommended for further reading:

https://www.ibby.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Tips_for_SB.jpg

<https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/uploads/store/mediaupload/128/file/Using%20wordless%20picture%20books.pdf>

https://www.ibby.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Silent_Books_ENG.pdf

Articles and list of wordless picturebooks in Spanish:

<http://reflexionesmarginales.com/3.0/22-imagenes-que-invitan-a-pensar-el-libro-album-sin-palabras-y-la-respuesta-lectora/>

<http://romanba1.blogspot.com/2017/01/albumes-sin-palabras-un-pequeno-vistazo.html>