

Using Illustrations and Photos in Literature
Curriculum: NOVICE and ADVANCED
Creator: Dar Bagby

Definition: Illustration (Latin, “make bright”): the use of examples, either textual or in picture form, to make ideas more concrete and generalizations more specific for a reader.

Goals: 1) Be able to explain the difference between verbal illustrations and pictorial ones
2) Be able to explain the differences in illustrated novels, picture books, graphic novels, periodicals, and illustrated nonfiction

Tools: 1) comic books, periodicals, children’s picture books, copies of illustrated novels (e.g., Janet Beasley’s *Hidden Earth Series: Maycly the Trilogy* Volume I Book1, “Two Altered Worlds,” or Book 2, “The Battle of Trust and Treachery,” or Book 3, “The Queen,” or Volume 2 *Planet Land*, “The Adventures of Cub and Nash,” or the companion illustration book “The Chukkons Say “Ye Need ta Be a-Seein’ Maycly;” Lewis Carroll’s “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland;” Charles Dickens’s “The Pickwick Papers”)
2) a copy of the HANDOUT for each enthusiast
3) a dry erase board or flip chart and appropriate marker

Ice Breaker: Distribute the various books/magazines to the enthusiasts. Tell them to take a look at them as you explain that each of the examples contains illustrations in pictorial form, either drawings, photos, or copies of illustrations. They are all considered illustrated material, but they are all formatted in different ways and serve different purposes.

Lesson

Distribute the HANDOUT to the enthusiasts and ask them to follow along as you discuss the lesson. Encourage them to take notes on the HANDOUT pages.

I. Types of illustrated books

A. Illustrated novel

1. Illustrations can be included in any genre
2. Adult books often contained illustrations until the late 19th/early 20th centuries

B. Children’s picture books and chapter books (ask the enthusiasts to read along as you read aloud the excerpts from the article on the HANDOUT, “Illustrations, Text, and the Child Reader: What are Pictures in Children’s Storybooks for?” by Zhihui Fang.)

C. Graphic novel

1. (according to the Oxford English Dictionary) “a full-length (esp. science fiction

or fantasy) story published as a book in comic-strip format” and may also be referred to as sequential art, comics, photo-novels, graphics, paperback comic novels”

2. Can be any genre, including fiction and nonfiction
3. Similar to comic books
 - a. use art to tell a story
 - b. presented in sequence to follow the text
4. In contrast to comic books
 - a. they are stand-alone stories
 - b. contain more complex plots
5. Some of the most predominant types
 - a. superhero stories (have taken over as the most popular form
 - 1a. have turned brief adventure episodes into epic sagas
 - 2a. dominated by a few mainstream publishers (e.g., Marvel, DC, Darkhorse)
 - b. manga (Japanese for “comic”)
 - 1b. read from left to right and top to bottom (traditional Japanese reading pattern)
 - 2b. used to describe Japanese style comics in the United States
 - c. personal narratives
 - 1c. also referred to as “perzines”
 - 2c. autobiographical stories from the author’s personal experiences or his/her observations and opinions

D. Periodicals and nonfiction

1. Usually contain photos or technical drawings
2. Use differing methods of publication (e.g., submission, format, etc.)

II. The ongoing conflict: Should Adult Books Contain Illustrations? (Read aloud the Christopher Howse snippet from Nov 2013 reprinted on the HANDOUT. Invite the enthusiasts to read, “What became of illustrations in fiction?” by Darragh McManus **on their own time.**)

III. Textual illustrations

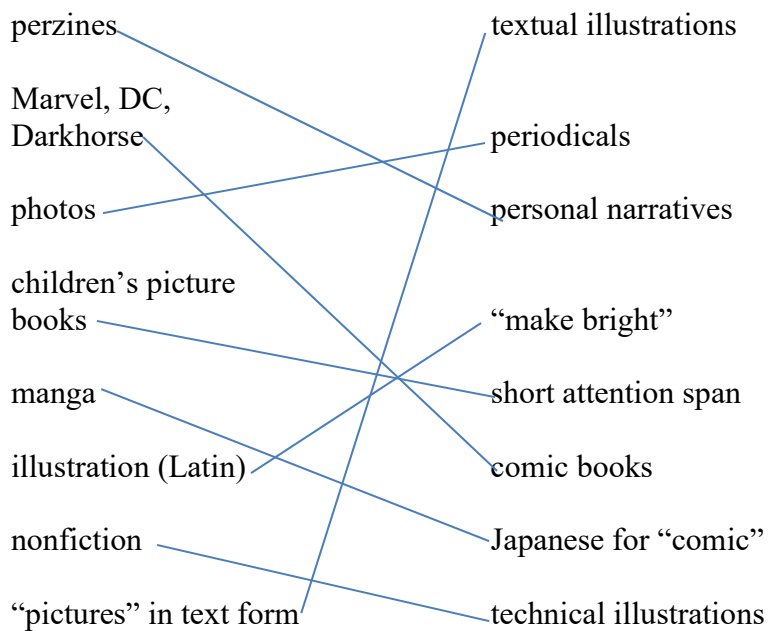
- A. The incorporation of examples **in text** as opposed to pictorial examples
- B. They enable the writer to **show** rather than simply **tell**
 1. They clarify or explain
 2. Often used as comparison
 3. The following textual illustration example is intended to help the reader better understand Donald M. Murray’s idea of writers:

Murray's Illustration of Writers as Dawdlers

"Even the most productive writers are expert dawdlers, doers of unnecessary errands, seekers of interruptions--trials to their wives or husbands, associates, and themselves. They sharpen well-pointed pencils and go out to buy more blank paper, rearrange offices, wander through libraries and bookstores, chop wood, walk, drive, make unnecessary calls, nap, daydream, and try not 'consciously' to

think about what they are going to write so they can think subconsciously about it."
(Donald M. Murray, "Write Before Writing." *The Essential Don Murray: Lessons from America's Greatest Writing Teacher*. Heinemann, 2009)

Activity: On the dry erase board (or chart) write the following: (do not include the lines—they are your **answer key**) Ask the enthusiasts to look at the choices on the left and pair each one with its closest partner from the list on the right. One at a time, have them volunteer to come up and draw a line from one to the other (one item per enthusiast).



Discussion: 1) Why do some authors think illustrations are unnecessary, possibly even harmful, in their novels?
2) Do you feel illustrations have a legitimate place in novels? Why or why not?

Using Illustrations and Photos in Literature
Handout: NOVICE and #1 ADVANCED

Creator: Dar Bagby

Definition: Illustration (Latin, “make bright”): the use of examples, either textual or in picture form, to make ideas more concrete and generalizations more specific for a reader.

Lesson

I. Types of illustrated books

A. Illustrated novel

1. Illustrations can be included in any genre
2. Adult books often contained illustrations until the late 19th/early 20th centuries

B. Children’s picture books and chapter books

Excerpts from: Illustrations, Text, and the Child Reader: What are Pictures in Childrens [sic] Storybooks for?

Zhihui Fang

1. Not only are illustrations integral to the text in picture books, they are also important to the child reader in a number of ways. **Despite reasonable concerns among some literacy educators (Chall, 1967/83, Elster, 1995) that illustrious pictures may distract children's attention from print, thus hindering their word identification and acquisition of written language, the contributions of pictures to the overall development of children's literate behavior seem to be overwhelmingly greater than its potential dangers.**
2. Illustrations in picture books **entice children to read and interact with text.** They motivate young readers to find/name hidden objects/characters or to predict what is going to happen next. Young children love to play hide-'n-seek and look for hidden objects in pictures.
3. Encourages children to make predictions.
4. Picture books can serve as an effective tool to **stimulate and promote children's creativity.** By reading picture books without too much linguistic text, children learn to use their active imagination to interpret and (re)create a mental representation of the story. Children often associate pictures with their life experiences or familiar images, construct meaning based on their existing schemas or schemata. **Children often come up with unique and creative interpretation** of the plot, settings, and characters when they read picture books.
5. Illustrations are important in that they provide mental scaffolds for the child reader, thus **facilitate their understanding of the written text.** The short attention spans of the young child, coupled with their limited vocabulary, syntax, and world knowledge, place special demands on illustrations to **help develop plots and characters** so that fewer words and less complex syntax can be used. Reading comprehension has been characterized as a constructive process in which the reader uses what is already known to help interpret the new information in the text (Anderson and Pearson, 1984).
6. As first-order symbols, pictures **represent relatively concrete, familiar experiences**, something young readers can easily identify with.

7. Further, illustrations in picture books **prompt an active elaboration of the printed text, thus facilitating learning by inducing the child reader to form mental images of the information** (Schallert, 1980). As Nodelman (1996) speculates, young children need pictures in books "because they find them easier to understand than words and need pictorial information to guide their response to verbal information"
8. Illustrations in picture books **foster children's aesthetic appreciation of art and beauty**...a basic in children's education and calls for fostering both children's linguistic and visual literacy. Aesthetic appreciation can be developed in part by consistent exposure to a wide variety of artworks that are coupled with pleasing stories in today's picture books. As "a perfect vehicle for opening a child's eyes to the beauty and power of art" (Jacobs and Tunnell, 1996, p. 34), illustrations in picture books **allow young readers not only to become aware of the variety of artistic styles and media that artists employ but also develop a sense of judging quality**. Many parents and teachers take the opportunity to comment on the art work as they share picture books with children (Dickinson and Keebler, 1989; Elster, 1995; Snow and Ninio, 1986). Their comments range from what they like about an illustration to calling attention to how artistic styles in different picture books vary and which of the varying styles the children prefer and why. **Children's taste and appreciation can be cultivated and expanded** as they are exposed to more picture books.
9. Illustrations in picture books **foster children's language and literacy development**. The combination of intriguing text, art, and topics found in picture books **feed children ideas**, stimulates their imagination and curiosity, and provides them with a rich vocabulary...children **hone their speaking and writing skills**.
10. Vivid language and figures of speech, coupled with illustrations, acquaint children with **new ways of experiencing and describing what they see and hear in the world around them**: rustling leaves, heavy stillness, slamming rain, and gentle wind soft as a lullaby. As choppy waves indicate the approaching storm...affords the child reader many opportunities to observe the sharp contrasts in nature (Nodelman, 1996).

Conclusion

In summary, illustrations in picture books are meant to delight, to capture attention, to amplify or tell a story, to teach a concept, and to develop appreciation and awareness in children. Given the important role illustrations play in children's picture books and in children's language and literacy development, it is imperative that teachers, textbook writers and illustrators become more sensitive to the information conveyed through the delicate interplay of print, pictures, and the child reader.

(READING HORIZONS, 1996, volume 37, #2)

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II. The ongoing conflict: **Should Adult Books Contain Illustrations?**

By Christopher Howse, 8:01PM GMT 21 Nov 2013

“...here is something very puzzling. Readers of Virgil’s Aeneid were delighted when it had coloured illustrations, as we know from rare 5th-century manuscripts. So were readers of Dante. Both are very grown-up books. But today we wouldn’t dream of reading novels with illustrations. It’s bad enough having an image from television on the front of a Jane Austen paperback – we feel like covering it in brown paper.

I really don’t know why this change came about. It took place after the death of the big Victorian novelists. Dickens’s illustrators (Phiz for *David Copperfield*, Cruikshank for *Oliver Twist*) moulded our idea of his characters, but did not define them. Characters from Dickens even formed subjects for popular painters such as William Powell Frith (whose Dolly Varden from *Barnaby Rudge* hangs in the Tate). Yet we still think them right for children’s books, and children have more powerful imaginations than dull old grown-ups.”

What became of illustrations in fiction?

In the 19th century, some kind of graphic component enhanced many novels, and our prosy era is missing out



Sir Pitt proposing to Becky Sharp. Illustration by William Thackeray to his novel, *Vanity Fair*.
Illustration: Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Darragh McManus

Tuesday 13 December 2011 12.01 EST

“...few works of fiction have any sort of graphic element at all. This has always seemed strange to me, especially considering the great effort publishers put into designing covers, choosing fonts, and so on. Illustrated fiction enjoyed a surge in popularity during the 19th century, but nowadays? I can count on two hands the books I've read that incorporate some design into their pages.

We can discount anniversary reissues, special illustrated hardbacks and the like; I'm talking about a standard novel or short story collection, on first publication. Very few have a visual element – and more of them should.

It wouldn't work in all cases, of course, and mightn't be absolutely necessary. But I do think that designs and graphics can add a lot to a book; they can certainly accentuate what's already there. I'm not mad about the use of photographs, as showcased in *The Angel Esmeralda*: unless the print resolution is exceptional, the rendering can be smudgy and indistinct. But illustrations, cartoons, inventive typography, doctored images – the world is your pictorial oyster.

I'm currently in production on a crime novel, out next summer, which includes a significant graphic element. It's not vital, editorially or narratively – the e-version won't have it, for technical reasons – but I honestly feel it will make the book a richer, deeper, more aesthetically appealing and more enjoyable experience. So why don't more authors do it?

They could be missing out on something. The plotlines and prose of graphic novels may not appeal to everyone, but the books do have a one clear advantage: the use of more than one medium. The word and the image, literary and visual, typewriter and pencil...a chain-linking of phrase and sound and perspective and light.”

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(Donald M. Murray, "Write Before Writing." *The Essential Don Murray: Lessons from America's Greatest Writing Teacher*. Heinemann, 2009)

Using Illustrations and Photos in Literature

Handout: #2 ADVANCED

Creator: Dar Bagby

FEBRUARY 22, 2013

Bring Back the Illustrated Book!

BY SAM SACKS



It's curious how much of literature we are conditioned to consider unlitrary. Few would contest the canonization of "Bleak House," "Vanity Fair," "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," and "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," but these classics have something in common we may be prone to disregard: each was published with profuse illustrations, and in each case the author relied on the artwork not only to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the book but to add meaningfully to the story.

Some of the art from the golden age of the illustrated novel remains a vital companion to the text. It is nearly impossible to go down Lewis Carroll's rabbit hole without envisioning John Tenniel's drawings of a ranting, bucktoothed Mad Hatter or of Alice eerily elongated after eating the currant cake. George Cruikshank was such a brilliant artist that his emotive illustrations for "Oliver Twist" retain a tenacious hold on the imagination. But we almost never find them in contemporary novels (on the rare occasions that they do appear it's as ironic anachronism—in Susanna Clarke's "Jonathan Strange and Mister Norrell," for instance, or Umberto Eco's "The Prague Cemetery," both of which are pastiches of nineteenth-century genre fiction). Even as graphic novels enjoy a surge of newfound critical appreciation, the common consensus seems to be that pictures no longer belong in literary fiction. It's reasonable to ask, Why not? What do we know that Dickens and Twain didn't?

It may [be] easy to dismiss the tradition of Victorian book art because of its origins in cartooning. Undoubtedly, many illustrators were caricaturists in the tradition of William Hogarth, whose raucous urban tableaux used comic distortions to point up moral lessons. But we need only look at "Vanity Fair," written *and* illustrated by William Thackeray, to see how much playful complexity can exist within the trappings of caricature. Thackeray had aspired to be a cartoonist before he took up writing (he unsuccessfully applied to illustrate Dickens's "The Pickwick Papers"), and his wonderful drawings play a sneaky, editorializing role throughout the novel. Some are of children playing with dolls, framing the story as a kind of metafictional puppet play. As the anti-heroine Becky Sharp progresses in her conquest of the venal English aristocracy, Thackeray depicts her as a man-eating mermaid, a female Napoleon, and the notorious husband-slayer Clytemnestra—this last portrayal was controversial even in its time because it implicates Becky in a murder that the text leaves ambiguous. The author is very much toying with us as he stages his entertainment.

Dickens was dependent on artists, but when he began working with the relatively unknown H. K. Browne (who signed his work with the moniker Phiz), he found an illustrator willing to abide an imperious amount of supervision. Browne has never been credited with deep artistic gifts, but under Dickens's overbearing instruction, his drawings began to subtly communicate the themes and motifs of Dickens's mature novels. Their collaboration became an essential element of Dickens's preparations for writing. The pair travelled together on fact-gathering trips. Letters between them show how dictating the contents of each panel illustration helped Dickens plan out his characters' physical and symbolic dimensions...

I suspect that most fiction writers would instinctively agree that interacting with visual representations of a book in draft can help give shape to evanescent impressions or inspire new ideas. (In the most famous instance, F. Scott Fitzgerald "wrote in" the image of T. J. Eckleburg's haunting optometry billboard after seeing Francis Cugat's dust-jacket design for "The Great Gatsby.") Nevertheless, a stickier problem lies beneath the writerly distrust of publishing fiction with illustrations. The real backlash to the universal custom began around the turn of the century.

In his 1909 foreword to a reissue of “The Golden Bowl,” Henry James sought to explain it (brace yourself, as this is the most Jamesian of Jamesian sentences). The danger of pictures of people and scenes, he wrote, is that “anything that relieves responsible prose of the duty of being, while placed before us, good enough, interesting enough and, if the question be of picture, pictorial enough, above all *in itself*, does the worst of services, and may well inspire in the lover of literature certain lively questions as to the future of that institution.”

This is one of the earliest articulations of the existential anxiety that still preys on novelists today. Basically, James was worried about movies. If prose was going to lean on the crutch of pictures, however charming, it was going to quickly find itself surpassed by far more dazzling mediums of visual entertainment. Literature needed to apply itself to doing the things that photography and film could not—it needed to evoke a scene’s inner workings.

In her 1926 essay, “Cinema,” Virginia Woolf reemphasized the distinction between visual stimulation and the ineffable conjurings of prose. When we watch a film version of “Anna Karenina,” she wrote, “eye and brain are torn asunder ruthlessly as they try vainly to work in couples.... For the brain knows Anna almost entirely by the inside of her mind—her charm, her passion, her despair. All the emphasis is laid by the cinema on her teeth, her pearls, her velvet.”

So writers somewhat defensively cleaved to this division: pictures were about superficial titillation; prose was about essences. And over time the opinion hardened that the old custom of accompanying illustration was a form of aesthetic corruption. There were many great twentieth-century exceptions, naturally—Reginald Marsh’s vivid sketches for Dos Passos’s “U.S.A.,” Noel Sickles’s splendid drawings for Hemingway’s “The Old Man and the Sea” in *Life* magazine (though not the published book), the entire magnificent run of the Limited Editions Club—but these usually had an air of nostalgia and collectibility [*sic*] about them. Increasingly, drawn portraits of characters appeared only in the pulps. Literary fiction, even on its dust covers, turned to images of static objects or abstract symbols or, sometimes, of nothing at all. Such ideological stringency reached its apogee when J. D. Salinger designed the paperback edition of “The Catcher in the Rye,” eschewing the lively drawing of a carousel horse that had adorned the hardcover for the starkly imageless “maroon-colored edifice” (in his biographer’s words), which immediately became iconic among high-schoolers and serial killers alike.

To an extent, of course, James and Woolf are absolutely right. The intricate psychological mosaics of character might seem to be pointlessly cheapened by tacked-on pictures of Isabel Archer or Clarissa Dalloway in party dresses. Sometimes it feels true that a drawing, with all its cumbrous literality, can ruin a delicately achieved effect. (On the other hand, both Isabel and Mrs. Dalloway have been portrayed in popular movies, and yet still people read the novels, and find them as profound and transporting as ever.)

But since film and literature have now managed to coexist for over a century without destroying each other, it may be time to reexamine some of these fears. The truth is that, to put it mildly, not everyone writes like Henry James. Some of our best novelists have extremely visual styles, and great, faithful illustrations would only intensify the reader's reactions to their writing... The examples of books that could be that much more attractive and inviting with the addition of artwork are endless. Then there is the future of digital readers, which erode that largely theoretical firewall writers have installed to keep their work from the corrupting influence of film. E-readers allow you to read text, look at pictures, and watch videos on the same device; already, "transmedia" books such as 2012's "The Silent History" have appeared that combine all three elements into the reading experience. (E-readers will also relieve the strain of printing costs, one of the factors that have led publishing houses to discourage illustrations.)

"What is the use of a book without pictures?" wondered Lewis Carroll's Alice, and anyone raised on illustrated classics like "Charlotte's Web" or "The Phantom Tollbooth" might secretly feel that she has a point. Writers may still demur, reasonably concluding that they are only accountable for, in Henry James' words, their "would-be-delicate and to-be-read-on-its-own-account prose." But the interplay between art and text is rich with possibilities that few fiction writers have even begun to explore. Illustrations are fun. Giving up on them sacrifices real pleasures for a needlessly narrow conception of literary purity.

Sam Sacks writes the Fiction Chronicle for the Wall Street Journal and is an editor at Open Letters Monthly.

Illustration: Getty.