

Read the Pictures, See the Words: The Creation of a Children's Book

St. Mary's Project
Artist Statement

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Submitted May 2012
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I believe that picture books are the safest, easiest, and least expensive way to travel. Especially if you are a child. When you think back to your favorite reading experiences as a youth it is most likely the books that “took you somewhere” that really stayed with you. The ones that made The Hundred Acre Wood, or the island of the Wild Things, or Middle Earth, or Hogwarts a place as real to you as your bedroom at home. And these places and characters were real to you not because they existed in real life, but because you could see them on the page, and because you heard their voices when your parents read to you, and you came to know them in your mind and love them in your heart just as you would a real thing or place. Perhaps it would be appropriate to call to your attention the Skin Horse from Margery William’s *Velveteen Rabbit*, as I don’t believe I can say it better than he did “Real isn't how you are made, " said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real. . . . once you are Real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always." (Williams, 7) And so as an author I placed Realness as the number one objective in my mind. Not realness, as in factual or realistic, but realness as in the ability to create characters and places that allow the reader to travel to another place for a little while through the pages of a book.

This goal of attaining Realness within my work, led me to examine the two major components of picture books, text and image, and how the two facets relate and interact in historical and contemporary contexts. I found that it is most often the case, traditionally speaking, that literature and art attained great canons only when kept separate (McCloud, 114). In fact Perry Nodelman, one of the earliest scholars in the field of picture books pointed out “picture books...are unlike any other form of verbal or visual art” thus extricating them from fitting comfortably into the category of either literature or art. He

elaborated saying that art and the text operate within a different relationship in picture books than they do anywhere else (Nodelman, 40). Even today words and pictures together, as they exist children's picture books or graphic novels, are often dismissed as works of frivolity (McCloud, 116). Children read picture books before moving onto works that are more text-based because picture books are considered "easier" to understand. With an occasional odd exception, such as William Blake, society has defined "real" works of literature as ones that do not contain pictures (McCloud, 116). However to read a children's book as just a "narrative with pictures" or to think of it as artwork with extensive captions, is to sell the work short and limit its value (Stevenson, 67). Deborah Stevenson, an editor and professor at the University of Illinois compares children's literature to "a play that comes with it's own sets" because of the way the words and pictures work together and the dramatic effect that is created when the text is read aloud. She relates it to other "combinative" art forms such as opera or musical theater, films, and ballet as well as older art forms such as courtly masque and emblem books (Stevenson, 67). When put in the light of combinative forms of "work" (I hesitate to say "art-work" because that seems to classify it entirely in one category) the picture book as an entire object seems to be a combination of four elements: content, picture, text, and overall effect (Stevenson, 68). The content controls the pictures and text, and the summation of the pictures and text is the overall effect, thus in my opinion, the most operative aspects of picture books are the relationships between the images and the words as these are the two aspects around which the story pivots.

The relationship between pictures and language is a long and complex one and the picture book only just began to be taken seriously as an object of academic scholarship during the final years of the twentieth century (McCloud, 114). The first major works in

English to address the form and its nature, *Ways of the Illustrator* by Jacob Schwarcz and *Words about Pictures* by Perry Nodelman, were published in the 1980's (McCloud, 115). Nodelman was the first to point out that the pictures in children's books exist to fulfill a different purpose than the fine art, which exists on museum walls with the "intent to provide visual stimulation or to excite our aesthetic sensibilities" (Nodelman, 40). He believes that although illustrations may have these effects, it is not their primary purpose (Nodelman, 41). Illustrations exist to tell part of a story and critics of children's books have too often approached them with the wrong expectations in mind, the same expectations with which they approach works of gallery art (Nodelman, 42). In fact Nodelman states that the components of formal art rarely exist in children's book illustration (Nodelman, 42). Interestingly he notes the amount of space illustrations take in children's books and equates that physical space to the amount of information the image should convey (Nodelman, 43).

Ways of the Illustrator by Jacob Schwartz, the peer of Nodelman's early publication in terms of literacy and scholarship surrounding picture books, was much more difficult to locate and unfortunately less available to the public. However the parts of it I was able to locate emphasized the difference between the domains of the real and the symbolic, and discussed how children's books mixed these areas in a unique way. Since these initial statements about children's books there has been a steady increase in the flow of articles, conference papers and book chapters dedicated to the study, criticism and analysis of the picture book and the way text and image relate.

Contemporary picture books represent a unique literary form that blends stories with art. In a picture book the illustrations are as important as the text, and both work together to tell the story. To investigate this relationship I searched for works that discussed text and image relationships in children's literature and on a broader basis. The relevant literature

supporting this topic is not only dispersed across fields but also at times hidden within documents that do not focus directly on the relationship between images and text.

The relationships between text and image are not limited to picture book authors and illustrators and the developments in this field are pertinent to many different areas of study. Several fields claim interest in understanding the relationships between text and images, including advertising, education, journalism, and information studies, and as a result a significant purpose of the existing research regarding the text and image relationships (such as the articles listed below of McCloud, Nikolejva, Carole, and Panteleo) attempts to establish a universal taxonomy. The types of people who would benefit from such a taxonomy include dictionary designers focusing on using illustrations to convey definitions or usage effectively, educational researchers who emphasize the instructional value of images and look at the use of illustrations in instructional texts for all age groups (photographs in high school text books), journalists who are interested in newspaper layout and how images effect retention of information, library and information studies researchers who have studied the information value of images in multimedia and the perspective-inducing function of text illustrations, and art historians. Developing a single system of classification would allow these individuals to break through subject barriers and communicate regarding the text and image relationships in a uniform and understandable way. Therefor when examining text and image relationships one must consider influences outside of the picture book that also may influence the way we read and relate text to image.

Within this broad dialogue that exists around children's literature I am specifically interested in types of text-image relationships. According to my research thus far several different image-text relationships have been identified but no single uniform system has yet been developed. Although each system has it's own nuances, many contain similar elements

and overlap with each other, dubbing the same relationship by different titles. The scholar, author, and illustrator Scott McCloud created one such system that resonated with me personally (McCloud, 170). Within his codification combinations where pictures illustrate but do not significantly add to a text are called “word specific,” and the opposite type of combination is where the words merely add a soundtrack to a visual story and this kind of relationship is called “picture specific” (McCloud, 170). “Duo- specific” combinations are where words and pictures work together to communicate the same message (McCloud, 171). “Additive combinations” are situations where words amplify or elaborate on an image or where words elaborate upon images. “Montage” is where the physical words are actually treated as parts of the image (McCloud, 172). The most common of all relationships is called “inter-dependent” and is where words and pictures work together to establish an idea that neither could fully communicate alone (McCloud, 172). This last category is the most popular because it encompasses all relationships that do not fit into either word or picture specific categories (McCloud, 172).

Next I would like to examine the ideas of Maria Nikolejva and Scott Carole, researchers who have presented an alternative taxonomy to McCloud’s. They do not believe that pages can ever fall into one category completely, but rather different elements of each page may fall into one of the categories they have developed. They have classified text and image relationships into five main categories: Symmetrical interactions (where words and pictures basically tell the same story repeating the same information in two different forms of communication (where pictures amplify the meaning of the words or the words expand the pictures so that the different information in the two modes of communication is more complex (Nikolejva, Carole, 222). This category corresponds to McCloud’s additive combinations), Complementary (where words and pictures fill each other’s gaps and thus

compensate for each other's insufficiencies (Nikolejva, Carole, 223). This is kind of similar to McCloud's inter-dependent, but also bears resemblance to additive combinations.), Counterpoint (where words and images communicate meanings beyond the scope of either mode alone. This corresponds to inter-dependent.), and Contradictory (an extreme form of counterpoint where words and pictures create an interesting and ambiguous imbalance in meaning, similar to parallel combinations but a bit different as this challenges readers to mediate between the words and pictures in order to establish a full understanding of what is being presented) (Nikolejva Carole, 222). Each of these categories establishes a distinct relationship that text can have with image. Given these interactions an author/illustrator is in the unique position to utilize them to their advantage.

Words often seem to be overlooked in examinations picture books, after all, there is a clear distinction between what are called *picture* books and what are called *text* books. In fact it seems decidedly difficult for authors of picture books to become well known off of that skill alone, it is only with additional accreditation such as producing works for older children, or illustrating their work that they become known. I definitely found in my research that there are many more articles and books about picture book illustration than there are about picture book text. It also seems to be difficult for authors of children's books to win awards for their work such as the Newberry (Stevenson, 68). It seems that some of the only widely known authors of children's books such as Eric Kimmel and Robert San Souci, are those that specialize in folk tale adaptations, which seem to gain more interest than original stories because they have cultural implications associated with them, and draw interest from different groups of readers (Stevenson, 68). In fact it would seem that one of the best ways to become known as an author, is to also be the illustrator of your work, and thus become known in that way.

However the textual components of picture books are underestimated, and as a result of false pretenses there is a sort of self fulfilling cycle of negativity existent within this genre of work. It seems simple to write a children's book, and so many people try it and do a bad job, but end up published anyway, thus promoting the idea that it is in fact, easy to write a children's book. There also seems to be pressure on authors of picture books to make them somehow educational, and this lesson seems to fall entirely on the text and rarely on the image. A didactic plot is not necessarily a good plot, and while many successful picture books exist which teach lessons, having a lesson in mind is not in itself a good enough reason to write a children's book. However there are obviously many good writers of picture books existing in the realm of contemporary literature and creating text that meets the images "at least halfway" (Stevenson, 69). It is the text after all, that adults will read aloud numerous times to their children, and this text must relate to the images but still have it's own essence.

A children's picture book is not a picture book without the illustrations and indeed these pictures operate with a language of their own. It is often the case that the illustrations are almost a part of the text itself in that they express meaning, plot and sub plot, and carry the story. The decisions on the illustration side of picture book creation are nearly as complex if not equally or more complex than the decisions that occur on the text side. Medium of illustration, photography or scanning of work, computer editing, choosing between different shades of black ink to insure that each page is uniform and precise, these are all complex aspects that must be considered in addition to creatively interpreting plot. Differences between watercolor and gouache, oil and acrylic, collage and photography, crayon and pastels, these are just the pure media decisions the artist must make. Black and white tells a story in a different way than color, sepia, monochromatic or any other color palate,

each tells the story in a different and unique way. Even without any text, illustrations can determine narrative in the way they affect the reader. Comparing at older prints and newer prints of the same images can demonstrate how a change in the development of printing quality alone can influence an image one way or another; images printed on older printers which had less color selections have a completely different feel to them than images from newer printers (Stevenson, 70)). Even when the text and illustration remain completely the same, the mood of the story can change with the color shifts, and the result is a different story.

The illustrations in any picture book are more than simply drawings on a page. There are formal aspects to consider such as composition, color, texture, etc., as well as less formal aspects such as aestheticism. And since these pictures are ultimately meant to end up in a book, the format must be considered, this includes not only the physical aspects of how the picture will look when scaled to the page size, but also how the picture conveys the content, how it puts forward the mood or tone, how it asks the reader to turn the page or linger. Books are objects that are meant to be viewed many times, and so the picture on the page of a book must be different than the pictures that hang in famous galleries or art shows, which are usually viewed only once or twice for only a few moments at a time.

Large amounts of white or black space on the page forces the reader to entertain expressions, feelings, and changes in the character's emotional journey. Characters may appear on opposite sides of different pages to signify opposition, or on the same page surrounded by lots of space to show a close bond. The illustrative art must match the intensity of the scene. The fact that there are pages at all must be taken into consideration as the drawing cannot be conflicting with the bookbinding that will exist in the center of every

page. These aspects of art are important and must be established while keeping the accompanying text in mind.

At times, the art may even carry the story depending on the text-image relationship the author or illustrator is attempting to establish. Picture books are geared towards an audience that is largely unable to interpret words, and as a result the illustrations play a large part in keeping up the interest of the child through the length of the book. When readers start to see picture books as a performance with words, they begin to see new ways to interact and participate in their story through pace. For example, in the illustrations of the book *Looking For a Moose* certain parts of the moose are hidden in the landscape for readers to find. In *I Ain't Gonna Paint No More* we discover a beagle, not mentioned in the text that becomes a pacing marker through his behaviors, and serves as the main character for an unvoiced subplot that unravels through the book. The beagle hides behind mama, hops into the bathtub, buries his snout in the stairs, and adds a new dynamic to the unfolding story through the development of this subplot. Beagle slows the pace and entertains the readers. Each element of the page must be carefully considered and not decided on a whim. Such is the occupation of the illustrator.

However text and image do not always hold equal authority within a text. As humans we tend to believe what we see and not what we are told (Stevenson, 71). For example, if you watch a television crime show, and you see a flashback of a man murdering someone, and then you later see him in the courtroom proclaiming he is innocent, you are most likely going to believe that he is guilty, as a result of what you saw, not what he said. The image, the picture, is generally accepted to be the “truth” while the text is less trustworthy. This is certainly the case with books and we see it in Janet Morgan Stoeke’s Minerva Louise series and Pat Hutchins’ *Rosie’s Walk* (all of these books are strangely

enough about chickens) where the illustrations are telling the real story while the text is meant to provide humor.

There do exist cases where just the opposite is true, where the images do not hold much credibility because they are illustrating the vision of a child. One such example is in Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* where we see Max's bedroom turn into a forest with monsters. Stevenson says it best "In a genre, the picture book, where depiction of the legendary is commonplace and integral to the logic of many books, illustrations walk that narrow border between literal reality and imaginative reality, in a sense offering an authenticity that may not match objective experience. (Stevenson, 74)"

Now that the relationships between text and image have been identified, the question remains how does one go about establishing them? While the writer's job is to whittle a story experience down to its essence, the illustrator's job is to expand the story through art (Pope, 67). As an author-illustrator, writing and creating images simultaneously I created plot while developing images and then attempted to fill the cracks in the plot with text. Understanding how the text in children's picture books works effectively is not enough information, one must also create effective images to accompany the text. In my case I had to create the text, as I was creating the images, and then work on their effectiveness as a combination during stages of revision.

Through reading many children's books I also learned that personally I prefer not to say in the art what is said in the text and vice versa. Maurice Sendak suggests that an author-illustrator:

"...must never be doing the same thing, must not ever be illustrating what you've written. You must leave a space in the text so the picture can do the work. Then you must come back to the word, and now the word does its best and the picture beats time. It's a funny kind of juggling act. It takes a lot of technique, a lot of experience, to really keep the rhythm going between word and picture." ("Notes" 185-86)

In my experience, being repetitive in this way is a waste of those few, precious words in the text to tell about something that is easily shown in art. I try to think about the physical amount of space the text takes up on a page, and the amount of space the illustration takes up in relationship to how much information each respectively conveys.

On the other hand it is important to remember that art and words are always interconnected, sharing the responsibilities of storytelling through the various text and image relationships discussed above. Good picture book texts are as much about what is said as about what is unsaid, and much of the setting, characterization, humor, and action will take place in the illustrations (Pope, 67). Anthony Browne, the UK Children's Laureate of 2009-2011 said it best "Picture books are for everybody at any age, not books to be left behind as we grow older. The best ones leave a tantalizing gap between the pictures and the words, a gap that is filled by the reader's imagination, adding so much to the excitement of reading a book." A picture book starts with the story and text and images are used to build on that content but it is relationships shared between text and image that really bring the page to life or make it "Real."

When discussing text and image relationships it is difficult to grasp the full impact of them without offering supporting images or concrete examples. For that reason I would like to offer a concentrated analysis of two author-illustrators who have influenced my work and shaped my perception of text and image relationships. Beatrix Potter is a historical reference who provided me with examples of how text can have a playful relationship with image. This appropriately mimics humorous and whimsical content of her stories where little creatures go on silly adventures. Maurice Sendak on the other hand, plays with darker content in his stories. His book, *In the Night Kitchen* was banned from many libraries across the United States for its display of full frontal nudity of the little boy in the story, who in his

dream simply isn't wearing any clothes. Many of his books address death, evil, and chaos in a very blunt manner, but his illustrations serve to alleviate some of the tension he forms in the text. Sendak is fully aware of formal text and image relationships and uses this knowledge when formulating his works, making his books excellent examples for this particular study. Both of these artists have inspired me with their use of text and image in picture books and I adapted many of their ideas to fit my purposes. However there are other authors and illustrators who I studied on a secondary level, Patricia Polacco and Shel Silverstein's works both share textual qualities with my work. I looked in their works for why our text is similar in style despite the extreme differences in content and illustration medium. I was interested in how the text in their stories worked successfully, and how mine played with the conventions that these authors used.

Patricia Polacco, author-illustrator of over 46 books and winner of numerous literary awards has inspired me with her use of creative prose. Her words seem to mimic the feel of the content they are conveying, for example on page 3 of *Thank You Mr. Faulkner*, when the grandfather is relating honey to the sweetness of knowledge. "The grandpa held the jar of honey so that all the family could see, then dipped a ladle into it and drizzled honey on the cover of a small book." Here the vowel sounds seem to draw out the length of the words, like honey slowly dripping from the ladle. Polacco's words also demonstrate how beautiful prose can be, and how it can have a very rhythmic quality without dipping into the realm of poetry. Later on the same page of *Thank You Mr. Faulkner* the grandfather speaks again. "“Stand up, little one,” he cooed. “I did this for your mother, your uncles, your older brother, and now you!”” Here again we see the flowing of the words when read aloud and how they smoothly roll over the tongue and almost rhyme. This soft flowing quality is emphasized by the medium Polacco illustrates in, watercolors which seem to bleed across

the page in vibrant colors. I think it would be too bold to say that Polacco and I share a style of writing. But I also use a large amount of prose in my books, and our text does have some of the same characteristics. Polacco has a tendency to be word-heavy in her pages, but she uses language in an artful way by utilizing literary devices and metaphors. Our illustrations are quite different in medium and style, but we both switch between word-specific, duo-specific, where both words and pictures convey the same meaning, and inter-dependent, where words and images convey meaning which neither could alone, relationships between the text and image. This may just be a similarity of personal styles or it may be because the content we are trying to convey is best expressed with through equal emphasis on text and image.

Another influence on my work has been that of Shel Silverstein, specifically his works *The Giving Tree* and *The Missing Piece*. In both of these works, Silverstein tends to be word-specific, but it is the illustrations that really compel the reader to sympathize and empathize with the characters in the story. Silverstein uses both rhyme and prose within his works, but regardless of the mode of the writing, he chooses each word very carefully and his writing has a very identifiable style. Silverstein is able to say a lot in only a few words. His work is deceptively simple, using a low vocabulary level and a conversational style. I too tried to keep my text simplified and easy to understand without giving up the complexity of my content.

I go now to Beatrix Potter, a historical author/illustrator for an examination of matching form to content, and form to audience in an effective manner. For Beatrix Potter it was important to connect form with function in her work, and her small books were appropriate to address the content of small creatures going about fairly mundane activities (Potter, 2). When attempting to issue *The Tale of the Pie and the Patty Pan* in 1905 and *The*

Roly-Poly Pudding in 1908 in a larger format did not gain success, the original small form of the book was found best and suitable for small hands (Taylor, 60). Because these books were intended for young children, here we see the idea of adjusting form to match audience, a continuation of the theme of “littleness”. Potter’s illustrations were small and detail was used appropriately to the proportion of the painted illustrations. She usually focused on one or two characters in each image but would occasionally draw back to allow the viewer to see a wider picture of the space the characters interact in. She used one image per spread and did not take up the entire space but rather left a white margin around the edges of the illustration and, as a result, the image seems equally weighted with the text on the opposite side of the spread. The illustrations are also minimalistic in that they only picture what is necessary. They convey a sense of proportion that is an important part of Potter’s work, and they also show the movement of the narrative from page to page. The image does not necessarily have a complete narrative within it, but it shows parts of the story and allows the text and the interaction of the different images to carry some of the weight of the narrative. For example, at the beginning of her book *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Potter clearly states in the text that there were four little rabbits, but the illustration only pictures three rabbits and a bit of a tail sticking out from behind a tree root. I would also like to point out the manner in which Potter moves through imaginary worlds in the pages of her books. When a forest is pictured in the background of one image and the foreground of the next image, the turn of the page has allowed the reader to travel through the place to explore a new aspect of the familiar area up close. I think this movement during the moment between pages is an important part of picture books, and it is something I definitely tried to capture within my own work.

The second author/illustrator, Maurice Sendak exemplifies effective use of text and illustrations in his book *Where the Wild Things Are*. During the 1960's Sendak quit his job as a window dresser for FAO Schwartz and published over fifty illustrated children's books. Both his time as his window dresser and his time creating children's books allowed Sendak to gain valuable experience that shaped the way he dealt with text and image. Dressing windows may seem unrelated to text and image, but in reality it is quite similar as the text advertising the toys or sales, relates to what is displayed in the window by mere proximity, even if the relationship is not intentional. Windows in this context can be thought of as pages, where the object and the text must combine to create both interest and overall meaning. This concept remained integral when Sendak transferred occupations to begin writing children's books. In 1963 his book, *Where the Wild Things Are* gained him international acclaim (PBS, 1). I chose this picture book to examine because of its apparent popularity and success, and also its transcendence of time, as it was written over fifty years ago, yet was made into a well-liked movie recently in 2009. I carefully examined this successful book as the work of an author-illustrator, to see the way text and image were dealt with and why this book has been able to remain so popular despite its rather frightening content.

On the first page of the book, there is no picture, just a blank white page with the black text crawling in one long line along the middle and two side paragraphs. The side paragraphs represent a conversation between Max and his mother. On the opposing page there is a picture of Max nailing a cloth into the wall angrily to make a fort, while wearing some sort of cat suit. Already on the first spread of the book, Sendak has had heavy text and image interaction. He does not show Max's conversation with his mother in the illustration, he only says it in the text, and in the illustration he shows what is assumed to be Max in his

room making mischief, but the text does not explain this, it is up for the interpretation of the reader. Thus in these pages Sendak is using what McCloud would call additive combinations, where the images are intensifying and elaborating upon what the text is stating.

The next two images show Max chasing a dog, while holding a fork in a threatening manner, and then Max standing in his neatly made up bedroom with his hand on his hip and an angry expression on his face (Sendak, 4). There are no words that directly accompany these illustrations, and they do not come all the way to the edges of the page. The whiteness here seems to suggest a calm quietness and the reader has time to concentrate on the image, because the text is so simplified, and it is surrounded by so much white space. Next there is a page with no image, just text. It reads, "That very night in Max's room, a forest grew."

There is an illustration on the opposing page which shows that the posts of Max's bed and the boards of the doorframe have indeed grown into trees inside Max's bedroom. Then another page with just text, "and grew." And the opposing image shows that the bedside table has turned into a bush, the bed has disappeared entirely, the carpet has turned into grass, and there are shadows of monsters along the back wall, but instead of being terrified, Max is smiling (Sendak 6). There is a sort of quietness to these images; the moon is shown at the window of each illustration, growing brighter and more full as the night progresses. The text is very sparse, which adds to this sort of "calm before the storm" feeling. The relationship used in these images is inter-dependent, as the pictures and words are working together to communicate a message that neither completely explains on its own.

Interestingly enough, the text and image are kept completely separate until Max arrives at the land of the wild things. In this spread, there is text on the left hand side of the page, and the image takes up the complete right hand side and also spills onto the left page

where the text is. There is also some interaction with the form of the book here as the seam between the pages divides Max from the first monster we have seen thus far in the book.

On the next spread we see the first text and image full page sharing. The image takes up a majority of the page, and the text is in a white space along the bottom. In these images there is a bit of repetition between text and image. The text says, “and when he came to the place where the wild things are they roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth” and the illustration does indeed show wild things with their mouths open and teeth showing. In some way, including the text and image on the same page, as well as offering some repetition between text and image really increases the “noise level” of the page. There is no longer that calm feeling that earlier pages in the story had because the pages are visually complicated, showing both text and image. The text and image continue in this manner with the text in a white space in the bottom of the page and the images above, until Max says “Now let the wild rumpus start,” at which point there are several spreads with only images and no text (Sendak, 10). The book continues like this until the wild things are sent to bed by Max.

When this happens the text comes back into the story in the white margins at the bottom of the page. When Max leaves the island of the wild things, there is another spread with the image bleeding from the right page to the left, but the left page is mainly reserved for the text and a large portion of it is kept white. When Max gets back to his room, the text has once again resumed an entire page, while the image remains separate and stays on the opposing page, just as it was at the beginning of the book. This lends the book a cyclical feel, which goes along with the indication that Max may have been dreaming about the wild things and is now waking up from the dream. The change is clearly signaled through the text and image relationships.

Sendak clearly paid close attention to the text and image relationships within this book. At times, they convey information that is not told by either the accompanying text or image, such as the indication that Max is dreaming, or the “loudness” or “quietness” of a page, or the speed at which time is passing. The illustrations also help to diminish the serious and frightening feeling of the text. Perry Nodelman completed a study on adult’s perception of *Where the Wild Things Are* and how their opinion of the story changes when viewing text alone, or image and text simultaneously.

When I have read the text of Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things Are* to adults who have not previously heard it, without showing them the pictures, many feel it to be a terrifying story, too frightening for young children. Without Sendak’s particular wild things to look at, they conjure up wild things out of their own nightmares, and those they find scary indeed. When I then tell them the story accompanied by the pictures, they always change their minds” (PBS, 1)

This book certainly has some frightening aspects to it, and while the illustrations put limits on the scariness of the wild things, Sendak does not dismiss this feeling of darkness that seems to be throughout the text. He includes it in the images to some extent by having everything outlined in thin black lines and through the dulled colors he uses for the images. Although the wild things might not be as frightening as those of real nightmares, there is still a certain edge retained in the illustrations. because of the dark line work and the dull color choice. Maurice Sendak has been one of the most forward thinking and critical voices in children’s literature, and his careful attention to text and image relationships definitely contributes to the success of his book *Where the Wild Things Are*. His work seems to transcend boundaries of culture and seems as if it will continue to be popular through the generations (PBS, 1).

Returning to many of the picture books I read as a child, I was definitely able to appreciate some of the more complex aspects of these works now that I have more background on the theories and choices regarding text and image. Many great artists and authors influenced me, but the ones mentioned above held the greatest authority over my work. I found inspiration in their pages, advice in their illustrations, and counsel in their page layouts. The orientation of the pages of my own book definitely benefited from studying the work of those who have had more experience in this field than myself, and I would be remiss not to note how the study of aspects of other picture books such as the text and art as well as other physical factors have impacted my own narrative and illustrations.

In Tom Stoppard's play *The Real Thing*, Henry, a character who is a writer, uses the metaphor of a cricket bat to explain effective writing, a goal to which I am working:

This thing here, which looks like a wooden club, is actually several pieces of particular wood cunningly put together in a certain way so that the whole thing is sprung, like a dance floor. It's for hitting cricket balls with. If you get it right, the cricket ball will travel two hundred yards in four seconds, and all you've done is give it a knock like knocking the top of a bottle of stout, and it makes a noise like a trout taking a fly... What we're trying to do is to write cricket bats, so that when we throw up an idea and give it a little knock, it might... travel. (Stoppard, 53)

This is what I have found many good authors and illustrators strive for—the “traveling” factor in their work. The mystical element that seemingly takes the words and pictures on the page, and in the reading aloud, makes these things “real” for the reader. When illustrations and text are put together at the right “speed” and read to children, they “travel.” This careful combination strikes a chord in children and adults alike. It is what inspires people to make movies, plays, and other works of art based off of the characters and

plots that originated in 32-page children's books. That author-illustrators had come before me and utilized text and image so successfully that it impacted the lives of their readers is what inspired me as I worked on this project.