

Using wordless picture book with children

Wordless books are an excellent way to encourage children to talk and tell stories, thus increasing vocabulary output and imagination skills. When children participate in the telling of the narrative, they practice the left to right pattern of reading. Wordless picture books are perfect for non-readers and non-English speaking parents because they can tell their own stories without feeling intimidated about missing the message of the book. Because of these benefits, picture books should be part of every early learning playroom.

There are 3 opportunities to use prompts when looking at wordless picture books: before, during and after viewing the book:

1) Asking questions ***before*** looking at the book builds the comprehension skill of predicting. Try the following predicting prompts:

- Looking at the cover, what do you think will happen in this story? Why?
- Then what will happen?
- How do you think it will finish?

Use this opportunity to write down the children's predictions. This helps them to make the connection between the spoken and the written word.

2) Asking questions ***during*** the storytelling experience helps children to clarify their understanding of the book. Clarifying is a strategy that helps children to build comprehension skills. Try a variety of the following clarifying prompts

- Open-ended prompts: "Tell me what's happening in this picture."
- Wh- prompts: Usually begin with what, where, when, why, and how questions.
"What did dog and cat do with the blanket?" "How did Dog cheer Cat up?"
- Distancing prompts: Helps children form a bridge between books and the real world.
"Remember when we built a tent with blankets?" "What foods did we eat when we went on our picnic?"

Remember to observe, wait, listen and then repeat the children's responses. Resist the impulse to ask questions on every page as this can interrupt the flow of the storyline. Recapitulate the story in the children's words every few pages.

3) Asking questions ***after*** reading/looking at storybooks encourages children to recall what they heard and saw and to summarize it into their own words. Retelling is a comprehension skill.

Ask who?, what?, but?, so?, then? questions to help children to build this skill. For example:

- "Who was involved?" – "Cat and Dog"
- "What was happening?" – "Cat was hiding under the blanket."
- "But?" – "Dog wanted Cat to come out and play."
- "So?" – "Dog went under the blanket."
- "Then?" – "Dog gave Cat a flashlight and they decided to make a tent."

This is a good time to revisit the predictions that were recorded at the beginning of the story.

The first rule of thumb is to invite, welcome, and acknowledge all questions and comments by the children. **There are no wrong answers**