"How Could That Be?:
Reading Banyai’s Zoom and Re-Zoom

Fifth-grade students read and respond to wordless picturebooks, including the nested images of Banyai’s Zoom and Re-Zoom.

The Pyramid
No matter how you read the book it’s like a pyramid always adding on.

Once Alyssa (all names are pseudonyms), a 10-year-old student in Grade 5, finished reading the wordless picturebook Zoom by Istvan Banyai (1995), she began to write in her response journal. She had previously written a prediction for the book based only on the front cover; midway through the book, she had written a response. As I circulated about the room, I read Alyssa’s final response about her reading transactions with Zoom.

At the beginning, I thought to myself, ‘How could that be?’ I turned back a page and realized the letters in the corner. After that, I started to look for hints in the pictures. In the Arizona scene, the third one, I knew it was a stamp because of the edge for example. But I was a little confused at the ending—I thought it was going to go back to the rooster! Another thing I did was imagine what happened after the dot at the end.

Alyssa’s response, as well as “The Pyramid,” a found poem I created from one of the sentences that Lisa wrote in response to reading Zoom from back-to-front, provide a glimpse of the nature of the students’ written responses to Banyai’s two wordless picturebooks, Zoom and Re-Zoom (1995). Analysis of the Grade 5 students’ responses revealed that they wrote about their sense/meaning making processes, including how the books’ structure and format influenced their responses—even when reading the books back-to-front! The data on Zoom and Re-Zoom discussed below came from two multifaceted studies that explored Grade 5 students’ responses to a collection of sophisticated picturebooks. The overall purposes of the two studies were to explore the students’ processes of reading and understanding texts with Radical Change characteristics (Dresang, 1999), and to examine how the students used their knowledge of these characteristics to create their own texts (Pantaleo, 2006, in press). This article discusses the students’ written responses to Banyai’s Zoom and Re-Zoom, two of the picturebooks used during the research.

Reading Visual Texts
Wordless picturebooks’ deep roots go back to preliterate people who used visual images to convey and chronicle their culture and history. Graham (1990) notes that although images pervade our everyday world of communication, “visual representations are believed to have been part of human society for almost five thousand years” (p. 7). Kress (2003) also writes about the pervasiveness of image in our “current landscape of communication” and believes that the “multimodal forms of contemporary text make it essential to rethink our notions of what reading is” (pp. 140 & 141). He describes how technological advances have resulted in changes in the “media of dissemination” (p. 9). He also explains how the screen has affected contemporary print texts, including the organization of the page and the use of multiple forms of visual representation. He states, “the screen is the site of the image” (p. 9), thus making the ability to read images very important.

Scholars agree that reading pictures, a type of image, is a multifaceted act. Interestingly, children often look at illustrations more closely and “see” details in pictures (Kiefer, 1995) that are missed by “skipping and scanning” adults.
(Meek, 1988, p. 19). Several individuals have explored how children read images in text (Arizpe & Styles, 2003; Kiefer, 1995; Styles & Arizpe, 2001; Walsh, 2003). For example, Arizpe and Styles (2003) used three multilayered picturebooks to investigate how children aged 4–11 read visual texts. The researchers found that the children, who participated in individual and group interviews about the literature, were sophisticated readers of visual texts. They “read colours, borders, body language, framing devices, covers, endpapers, visual metaphors and visual jokes” (p. 224).

The visual representations in picturebooks involve a range of media, techniques, and styles. Not only have illustrations become increasingly sophisticated over the years, but changes in printing technology have also affected the range of artwork represented in picturebooks. Although the illustrations in picturebooks are a “source of aesthetic delight,” everything about the illustrations conveys “information about how viewers are being invited to [read and] respond” (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p. 278).

A semiotic relationship exists between the visual and verbal texts in picturebooks. The illustrations and the words work together to convey a message, and both sign systems, the text and the illustrations, are necessary for constructing meaning. Although several schemes have been proposed to describe the perceived interaction of pictures and words in picturebooks (for example, Agosto, 1999; Doonan, 1993; Golden, 1990; Lewis, 2001; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001; Schwarcz, 1982), Siegel’s concept of transmedialization, “a special case of semiosis in the sense that learners use one sign system to mediate another” (1995, p. 461) seems to accurately describe the synergistic relationship. Synergy can be defined as “the simultaneous action of separate agencies which together, have greater total effect than the sum of their individual effects” (Guralnik, 1976, p. 1444). In picturebooks, the “total effect” depends on the text, the illustrations, and the reciprocity between these two sign systems where “we adjust our interpretation of the pictures in terms of the words and our interpretation of the words in terms of the pictures” (Sipe, 1998, p. 103).

However, in wordless picturebooks, the reader/viewer is presented with only one sign system, the visual text. The verbal/written text is provided by the readers. In 1992, David Wiesner’s wordless picture book Tuesday (1991) was awarded the Randolph Caldecott Medal; in his acceptance speech, Wiesner discussed the reader interactivity required by wordless picturebooks, noting that “the reader is an integral part of the storytelling process” (1992, p. 421). He also maintained that “each viewer reads the book [Tuesday] in his or her own way” (p. 421). Later, in an interview, he stated that his version of Tuesday was “no more valid than anyone else’s who reads it” (Caroff & Moje, 1992/1993, p. 287).

Wordless picturebooks, like all literature, vary in their level of sophistication and complexity. Some wordless picturebooks, like Zoom and Re-Zoom, are visually more demanding. In these two books, readers experience substantial visual gaps as each page turn reveals a miniature replica of the previous image in a broader and generally unexpected context. As well as being recognized for their artistic and aesthetic value, wordless picturebooks have the potential for developing students’ language and literacy skills. They have been used to develop students’ concept of story (Reese, 1996), as well as comprehension, oral language, and writing and visual literacy skills (Crawford & Hade, 2000; Ellis & Preston, 1984; Lindauer, 1988; Read & Smith, 1982). Further, wordless picturebooks have been used successfully with readers of varying ages and abilities, and in a range of curricular areas (Ammon & Sherman, 1996; Cassady, 1998; Ellis & Preston, 1984; Flatley & Rutland, 1986; Gitelman, 1990). Crawford and Hade (2000) were interested in the sense-making processes used by readers when reading wordless picturebooks. They found that the three young children in their study used “many of the same strategies for reading wordless books” (p. 78) as they did when reading books that contain both print and visual texts (e.g., accessing prior knowledge, making intertextual connections, adopting multiple perspectives).

The written responses of the Grade 5 children in this article provide a window into their reading transactions of Banyai’s two wordless picturebooks. The students’ responses to Zoom and Re-Zoom are discussed with reference to aesthetic response to literature (Rosenblatt, 1978),

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visual literacy, comprehension, and literary understanding.

**Zoom and Re-Zoom**

Banyai uses the same concept and design in both wordless picturebooks. He takes readers/viewers on a visual journey as an imaginary camera pans out backwards to show an increasingly distant perspective of the previous scene. His technique resembles mise-en-abyme, a visual or verbal text “embedded within another text as its miniature replica” (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001, p. 226). Each scene is indeed a small part of a larger scene and, on several occasions, a totally unanticipated scene. The format of the books could be described as matryoshkas—Russian stacking or nesting dolls, in reverse, as each page turn reveals the former illustration to be part of a larger artwork. This format is not the only factor that contributes to the “narrative connectedness” of the two books, however; there are other visual consistencies as well.

Each book has black glossy verso (left-hand) pages that serve “almost as stage curtains in their dramatic severance of one act from another” (Stevenson, 1995, p. 189). The flat-coloured illustrations on the recto (right-hand) pages are outlined with black pen line. Both books have detailed illustrations, present multiple visual perspectives, and playfully suggest that, “things are not what they seem” (p. 190).

**Zoom** begins with a close-up of a rooster’s comb. Further zooms reveal that the rooster is part of a toy farm set that is part of an advertisement on a magazine being held by a boy on a cruise ship. However, the ocean liner is really a poster on a city bus that is on a television show being viewed by a man in the Arizona desert. The scenes continue to expand on a stamp on a letter, to a view through the window of an airplane. At one point near the end of the book, Banyai not only zooms back, he alters the details in the scene. The outward expansions continue until readers see Earth as a white dot.

The first close-up shot in **Re-Zoom** seems to be a prehistoric cave painting of a hunter with a bow and arrow. Kudo, one of the Grade 5 boys, described his reading of the first few rectos in **Re-Zoom** in his response journal.

First I thought it was a bird. Then I thought it was a person, and then I thought it was a bird person! I turned the book all sorts of ways upside down and sideways and then right side up. On the third page I saw a man with a bow shooting a woolly mammoth in a watch. Then I saw it was placed on a HAIRY pincushion! On the third page there was a man who was very hairy that was painting with the watch on! On the next page it had the hairy man and he was in a building. Then I turned some pages and the building was in a strange triangle and I turned it all around again just like page one.

As Kudo explains, the cave painting is on a watch face worn by a man who is making a rubbing of the symbols on the ancient walls of a structure. The “strange triangle” Kudo refers to is the Paris Obelisk, the first obelisk in modern times to be taken out of Egypt. The book has several shifts in locale from Paris, to a movie set supposedly set in a jungle. However, the movie set is a decoration on a steamer trunk that turns out to be part of a painting. The book contains several complex perspective shifts and numerous intertextual connections (e.g., the Paris Obelisk, Place de la Concorde, the Goodyear Blimp, Napoleon, the Eiffel Tower, Alfred Hitchcock, and numerous well-known individuals on the subway train car at the end of the book). Various mediums of communication and modes of transportation are represented in the scenes. The metafictional ending draws readers’ attention to the fictive status of the book (Pantaleo, 2004a, 2004b; Waugh, 1984) as every scene in the book that the reader has just viewed is in the magazine being read by an adolescent male on a subway train. The book ends with two red dots—the taillights of the subway train.

**The Research Context**

The children’s responses to **Zoom** and **Re-Zoom** that are discussed below were gathered during two studies that I completed with Ms. H. and her students. As stated previously, the research focused on exploring Grade 5 students’ processes of reading and understanding texts with Radical Change characteristics (Dresang, 1999), and examining how the students used their knowledge of these characteristics to create their own texts.
certain procedures were revised due to our previous year’s experiences and classroom time constraints. Ms. H. and I began each year by talking with the students about the notion of “response.” As well as participating in activities that focused on response to literature, the children engaged in activities that featured intertextuality, the active role of the reader in comprehension and interpretation, and small-group discussion behaviour, etiquette, and protocol. Based on our experiences with 5A, we devoted additional time to teaching 5B and 5C about writing personal responses and discussing literature in small groups.

Zoom and Re-Zoom were the first picturebooks we used to introduce the students to literature with Dresang’s (1999) Radical Change characteristics, such as “multiple layers of meaning, interactive formats” (p. 19), and multiple perspectives. In addition, the concept as well as the design and format of Banyai’s books are distinctive and unusual, and I wanted to disrupt the students’ expectations about picturebook design and layout features at the beginning of the studies. The children knew that part of the research involved reading picturebooks with features that would extend their schema about picturebooks. Further, I wanted to communicate and emphasize the fundamental role of the artwork in picturebooks and the importance of looking carefully and thoroughly at illustrations; due to the absence of written text in Banyai’s wordless books, the children had to read/view and interpret only one sign system.

In each class, one-half of the students read Zoom and one-half read Re-Zoom (I had 10 copies of each book). Subsequent to writing predictions about the books based on only the front covers, and completing two journal entries (one midway and one at the end of the book), the students discussed the books in small peer-led groups with others who had read the same book. The students then exchanged books so that every child had an opportunity to read both of them. Finally, each student created her/his own “Zoom” book emulating Banyai’s zooming technique (see Figure 1).

During each year of the research, the picturebooks were presented in a particular sequence that reflected the increasing complexity and sophistication of the literature. The order of the other
The use of “Z” and “RZ” after students’ names indicates whether the written response was about Zoom or Re-Zoom.

**The Books’ Format and Design**

Most of the students who wrote about the format and design of the picturebooks focused on more than one aspect. Some students expressed surprise over the wordless nature of the books and recognized the need to read the pictures. Shazia’s midway response to Zoom communicated the latter: “You can’t read it. You look at the pictures. It’s about a picture turning into a picture. I wonder what will happen next?” As part of their responses about Re-Zoom, Devon wrote, “I was shocked that there were no words and just pictures in pictures,” and Jordan wrote, “I liked how the pictures tell the story, not the words so you make it whatever you like—it’s like all in your imagination, not the illustrator’s.”

Most of the children wrote about Banyai’s zooming technique in either their midway or final response. As part of her midway response to Zoom, Riley wrote, “In my mind I think of how a camera works because it has a zoom lens.” The students recognized the intratextual nature of the books created by Banyai’s illustrative nesting framing device.

“*I liked how the pictures tell the story, not the words so you make it whatever you like—it’s like all in your imagination, not the illustrator’s.*”
The children recognized the multiple perspectives and layers of meaning that were created by Banyai’s artistic devices.

Morrie (Z): It was very interesting how they make one picture into another. I see why they named it Zoom. I think they named it that because you zoom out of the picture. It must have been very hard to make this book because they have to think what kind of picture can fit into another.

Katherine (Z): I liked how the book would zoom into something and then it would turn out to be a postage stamp or something. I also found why it’s called Zoom. It’s because they are zooming into everything. I thought it was neat because you look at everything from a different perspective.

Mark (RZ): There were no words because you had to read the pictures. It was weird because in the end the boy was reading a book and every page we flipped, he flipped too. It all just comes out of literally two books. I thought that book was really cool because it was like reading two books except it feels like I’m in only one book and then coming out of two. It was like reading two books at the same time. And also kind of being two people. It’s the guy on the subway reading a book and I’m in it but I’m also reading a book in real life, too. Man, this is hard to explain. That’s not part of the response.

Nolan (RZ): I thought it was really very creative how he starts off with one little picture on someone’s watch in a city and ends up with three people riding on an elephant in a jungle somewhere. It’s cool how he goes from one thing and then makes it something totally different.

In these responses, the children revealed their understanding and appreciation of Banyai’s zooming technique. All of the students expressed admiration for the talent and skill required to create the visual texts that so innovatively embedded illustrations within each other. The children recognized the multiple perspectives and layers of meaning that were created by Banyai’s artistic devices. The written responses indicated that the students were “seeing,” “looking and thinking” (Macaulay, 1991, p. 411)—important activities for enhancing their visual literacy competences.

Some of the Grade 5 children expressed confusion and curiosity about the shifting images on each subsequent recto. Alyssa encapsulated most students’ initial responses to the first few pages of the books when she asked, “How could that be?”

Zoe (Z): Now I know why it’s called Zoom. I think of it like a camera zooming in on the picture that you’re taking. But at first I wondered, “What is going on?” I wondered what it was but after the fourth or fifth picture I started to catch on!

Trent (Z): It had a lot of pictures and then kept on zooming out and showed the background over and over again. I thought it was sort of confusing and interesting because you didn’t know what was going to happen. I think it was very random and it was nothing that I was thinking. It was hard at the first 4–5 pages because it had no letters.

Although some were initially perplexed by the books’ design and format, the students’ written responses communicated their active and affective engagement with the text as they worked to construct meaning. Most of the students enjoyed the challenge of predicting the next illustration. As part of her midway response to Re-Zoom, Mary wrote, “I really think this is a neat book because it keeps you guessing on what kind of picture will come next. I love it!”

A few of the children wrote comments about the author’s choices, talents, and mistakes. As part of Sandra’s midway response to Zoom, she wrote, “I think it is really cool that when you flip to the next page you also see more, but not just that everything is still in the exact same position but farther away. I think that being able to do that is a real talent.” Only a few students wrote something about Banyai’s use of black pages. However, the children contributed many insightful and perceptive comments about the significance of the black verso pages during their small-group and whole-class discussions.

Nick (RZ): It was interesting how every left page is black. The author probably made the left side black so you would focus on the right-hand side.

Edward (RZ): I can look at the point that I can see mistakes in the stuff like on the page where there is a boy in the subway train in the Japanese sign is on the right side. But on the magazine picture there is a stripe sock but after that there isn’t. These are some of the mistakes I noticed.

The students’ responses showed that they were looking closely at the illustrations. Further, many of the children’s responses revealed that they thought about how Banyai’s framing device...
contributed to the design of the book as well as to their aesthetic pleasure of the text.

**Reversibility**

The format and design of the books allow them to be read/viewed from back-to-front. I was amused by the students’ facial expressions when I instructed them to read the book backwards. Several looked puzzled by receiving permission to violate this cultural reading convention. Other children smiled, somewhat mischievously, and a few whispered conspiratorially, “I already did.” I instructed the students to read the books from back-to-front to encourage them to think about the possibility of multiple reading paths. In his discussions about the influence of the screen on a theory of literacy, as well as on the pragmatics of reading and writing texts, Kress writes about how readers are socialized into particular forms of reading. To him, “a reading path is nearly as much a matter of the social as it is of the semiotic” (2003, p. 160). Several of the picturebooks read by the students during the research offered multiple reading paths, and according to Coles and Hall, “multiple reading pathways are part of the repertoire of a skilled and experienced reader” (2001, p. 111). From the outset, I wanted the students to experience and think about the flexibility of the picturebook format and to learn “that it isn’t necessary to think in a straight line to make sense” and that “risk can be rewarded” (Macaulay, 1991, p. 419).

The students’ reactions to reading *Zoom* and *Re-Zoom* from back-to-front varied. Three students did not write a response about reading the books back-to-front, 3 children thought there was no difference, and 7 students found it less exciting and preferred reading the picturebooks front-to-back. For example, Sandra wrote, “I think when you go backwards it is kind of confusing. You don’t really see the getting closer or backing away.” Five students still found the books interesting because of the different perspective offered by reading the books back-to-front, even though they knew the content of the books. Eight children preferred reading the book backwards because they found it more interesting and, according to them, the book made more sense. The remainder of the students explained their thoughts or feelings when they read the book back-to-front.

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**Kyle (RZ):** I think that it’s still exciting even though you already know what the pictures are because the pictures are more bigger and it looks like you’re going inside the book.

**Shecara (Z):** I liked reading it backwards because it was like a magnifying glass on a big picture. Rereading it backwards was really fun because you knew what was coming but it was from a different point of view.

**Devon (RZ):** If you read it backwards, *Re-Zoom* becomes *Zoom* and vice versa. When you read it backwards it becomes a totally different story. I thought that it was a cool book because I would never have thought that the book was about pictures that got smaller and smaller and bigger and bigger when you read it backwards.

**Nidhiki (Z):** When I read it backwards, it seemed like it was zooming in on the rooster in the magazine on the cruise ship sign on the bus on the TV, on the stamp, on the airplane view on the Earth. I liked reading it backwards because it looked like I was falling through the pictures.

**Jordan (RZ):** Flipping back into the book was like taking a ride into a book the way it took you on a roller-coaster through the book. It was extraordinary how the illustrator organized the pictures and emphasized the photos. The way he took you and put you in the pictures going backwards it was like a vortex sucking you in with all its might, power and grasp. It shot you right through the book and you would be going so fast but still see the story at hand.

As is evident by the above responses, several Grade 5 students described the zooming sensation they experienced as they read the book front-to-back, and then back-to-front. Many children’s written responses included similes to describe their physical sensations of reading the book backwards. Since the students knew both the content and format of the books, they seemed to focus on the holistic experience of reading the book back-to-front.

**The Students’ Sense/meaning Making**

The students’ responses revealed how they were trying to make sense of the picturebooks. As well as describing their reading strategies, they explained what they were thinking, feeling, wondering, and
understanding during and after reading the books. The children’s written words described their evoca-
tions and their interpretations.

The written responses of several students reflected their interest about the real and unreal aspect of the book. Others wrote about the never-ending potential of the books.

Michelle (Z): The pictures were getting bigger and bigger. I wondered why they were getting bigger and bigger. First I thought the first picture was real and on and on and on. Then I was almost positive that the girl in the magazine was real. Then the same with the cruise ship.

Jenny (RZ): I thought they were real people not fake people painted on a chest. I thought the boats were in the ocean, not in a fountain in a picture. I thought the house was real, not on the fan! That’s a very cool postcard. Oops, I mean book!

Mark (RZ): It was like everything looked live but it was only getting painted or it was on a picture. It was also like backing up and seeing what it really was. I was wondering if it would ever come to an end. Now I know why they called it Zoom I think. Because it’s like zooming out of the picture.

Zoe (Z): It could go on forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever [makes printing smaller as she repeats the word “ever”] until there’s nothing left. I liked how every picture was different because a lot of books aren’t like that.

Numerous students described how they tried to identify what was real in each recto. The students’ perceptions of reality were disrupted each time they turned the page. It was interesting how many children continued to focus on the real/unreal aspect even though they understood the design of the picturebook. The possibility of continuing with an ever-expanding perspective intrigued several students.

Some children thought there were multiple stories in the picturebooks, some thought the stories were interconnected, and some thought there was no story.

Andrew (RZ): The book was mainly about random pictures of things. I would have liked the book better if it wasn’t just random things and if there was a story to it.

Jerry (RZ): I liked that it kept zooming out and all the pictures were linked together but each had a different story. My favourite part was the Asian elephant and from then on because it was very interesting how the author came up with all these ideas and how they linked to each other.

Cochim (RZ): I was thinking how the next scene was going to relate to the page I was reading. I was also thinking about what the book is about and how to write it down. I was thinking about what time period that picture book took place in and why the illustrator placed that picture there.

As is discussed in more detail below, the indeterminate nature between page-turns invites readers to take an agentive role in filling in the gaps and making connections between the recto pages. Some students thought each recto told a
story, others thought that the books could be organized into sections that told stories, while other children thought the rectos were linked and constituted one story. Although wordless books always require readers to provide the oral/written text, the nature of Zoom and Re-Zoom encouraged an even more active coauthoring role by readers as is evident by their responses below.

Many children’s responses reflected their anticipation of and fascination with the evolving and layered visuals in the books. The students explained their thoughts about the pictures and guesses about successive illustrations. In the written responses of several students, they shared their excitement, enjoyment, and surprise.

Lily (Z): I thought the book was very interesting. I liked how the little farm became a toy magazine and then the magazine ended up in the boy’s hand and then so on . . . I would try to predict about what the next picture would be like. I thought the cruise ship would end up as a postcard but it was an advertisement on a bus. I also thought when the world was going to get smaller and show the other planets.

Sandra (Z): The second half does the same thing by getting farther away. At the end, the world almost turned into nothing. It gets you really excited once you know what is happening because it makes you really want to see the next page. I wish the ending didn’t finish so fast because I wanted it to go on.

Jenny (RZ): In the first picture it looks like a lot of lines and colour. I assumed it was the man’s painting. On page 8, I thought the man was in a pyramid but on the next page, I thought otherwise. I didn’t get how the tall oblong-gated pyramid got into the middle of the city but again on the next page I saw why. It’s cool how it turns into a movie set in Egypt. I thought the movie set was in France but it was in the middle of the forest.

Fred (RZ): It just kept going and going and going. It ends up being a book. Why do they make books like this? I hate how you think, “What is it?” It’s a person that’s in a book that’s in another book. It’s really weird because you think it’s about this but then it’s about something else and you’re thinking, “What? That’s not possible.”

Thus, the children described some of their thinking processes and affective responses as they constructed meaning during their reading of the books. The students generated and modified predictions, asked questions, and expressed opinions.

**DISCUSSION**

The students’ written responses reflected their intellectual and affective engagement with Banyai’s picturebooks. Although readers should always be actively involved in the construction of meaning during the reading event (Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978), the nature of wordless picturebooks positions readers in the role of coauthors. The students had to fill in the visual gaps between each recto as well as create “text” for Zoom and Re-Zoom. The children had to interpret the visual signs, then fill the signifiers with meaning and make new signs (Kress, 2003).

Iser writes about one means that authors use to intensify a reader’s imaginative activity:

… to cut to new characters or even to different plotlines, so that the reader is forced to try to find connections between the hitherto story and the new, unforeseeable situations. He is faced with a whole network of possibilities, and thus begins himself to formulate missing links. (1978, p. 192)

In Banyai’s books, every recto is a “cut” and the children, as is revealed by their responses, worked to connect the scenes. As well as constructing associations among the shifting, multiple perspectives, the students engaged in other reading strategies, such as generating questions, accessing their background knowledge, imagining possibilities, anticipating events, revising predictions, and creating sensory images. The children’s responses show how they constructed, modified, questioned, and evaluated the meanings they made as they read the books. The students’ reading experiences reflect Iser’s ideas about a reader’s wandering viewpoint, how readers are “continually forming and modifying both expectations of what is to come and interpretations of what has previously been read” (Thomson, 1984, p. 21). Thus, the Grade 5 children used a variety of effective comprehension strategies when reading Banyai’s wordless picturebooks (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Similar to the findings of Crawford and Hade, the students made sense of the
wordless picture books “by using sense-making processes similar to those used in the reading of print-based texts” (2000, p. 66).

Margaret Meek (1988) writes about the private lessons readers give themselves as they interact with texts. Although familiar with wordless picturebooks, several students wrote about the novel format and design of _Zoom_ and _Re-Zoom_. Their readings and discussions around these books expanded their schema for wordless picture books, particularly since the zooming illustrative framing device challenged or disrupted their reading/viewing expectations. Banyai’s books require readers to tolerate ambiguity (Meek) and uncertainty, and these abilities, as well as understanding irregularities and complexities, are fundamental to children’s growth as readers and to their future successful transactions with more sophisticated texts. The use of multiple representations of concepts contributes to students’ development of “cognitive flexibility . . . of having a diversified repertoire of ways of thinking about a conceptual topic” (Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich & Anderson, 2004, p. 645).

The children’s transactions with the two wordless picturebooks also provided them with lessons about metafiction, and hence extended their literary understanding. _Zoom_ and _Re-Zoom_ are metafictive texts (Lodge, 1992; Waugh, 1984) as they draw attention to their fictional status through several devices (e.g., disruptions of traditional time and space relationships, illustrative framing, intertextuality, indeterminacy, and “availability of multiple readings and meanings for a variety of audiences” Anstey, 2002, p. 447). By drawing readers’ attention to how texts work and to how meaning is created, metafiction reflects “upon the processes through which narrative functions are constructed, read and made sense of” and poses “questions about the relationships between the ways we interpret and represent both fiction and reality” (McCallum, 1996, p. 397). McCallum notes that, “underlying much metafiction for children is a heightened sense of the status of fiction as an elaborate form of play, that is a game with linguistic and narrative codes and conventions” (1996, p. 398). As is evident by their written responses, the Grade 5 children were simultaneously engaged with the books and aware of the artistic devices and layout features used in the texts’ construction (i.e. how the texts were working).

The playful nature of Banyai’s metafictive texts aroused the students’ curiosity, engaged them cognitively, and encouraged them to look carefully and “see things.” Indeed, reading _Zoom_ and _Re-Zoom_ provided the students with opportunities to read images, an aspect of visual literacy. Although not writing specifically about wordless picturebooks, Kiefer believes that “experts in the field of visual literacy have often neglected the potential of picturebooks to develop visual literacy” (1995, p. 10). Yenawine defines visual literacy as “the ability to find meaning in imagery” and states that “many aspects of cognition are called upon . . . but subjective and affective aspects of knowing are equally important” (p. 845). The students’ written responses revealed their construction of meaning in imagery, and their cognitive and affective engagement. The children’s responses support the findings of Walsh (2003) and Arizpe and Styles (2003) that reading pictures is a complex act.

**Final Thoughts**

Some individuals believe that the changes in current children’s and young adult literature reflect the broader historical, social, and cultural movement referred to as postmodernism (Coles & Hall, 2001; Goldstone, 1998, 2001/2002; Lewis, 2001;}

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**Wordless Books That Invite a Second Look**

- **Anno, Misumasa.** _Anno’s USA_. Philomel, 1983.
- **Banyai, Istvan.** _The Other Side_. Chronicle, 2005.
- **Messenger, Norma.** _Imagine_. Candlewick, 2005.
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McCallum, 1996; Yearwood, 2002). As noted earlier, Dresang’s (1999) Radical Change theory, like postmodernism, recognizes how temporal and spatial relationships in society “have resulted in historically manifested narrative forms” in literature (Holquist, 1990, p. 109). Although Dresang’s (1999) theory includes many of the characteristics associated with postmodern society, she does not use postmodernism as a context to frame her theory. Rather, as explained previously, she proposes that the digital principles of connectivity, interactivity, and access “explain the fundamental changes taking place in the body of literature for young readers” (p. 14). Dresang also states that these three principles refer to both the readers and the literature. The principles of connectivity and interactivity are most germane when considering both Banyai’s wordless picturebooks and the children’s written responses to the books. With respect to connectivity, the Grade 5 students’ responses to Zoom and Re-Zoom reflected how they generated connections to their personal experiences, as well as connections among the variousrectos and the multiple perspectives and layers of meaning in the books. Further connections were articulated during both the peer-led small-group and whole-class discussions. The written responses indicated a high degree of interactivity as students actively constructed meaning during their reading transactions.

“If one of the strengths of the contemporary picture book is its experimentation, its breaking of boundaries, an even more important element is its power to delight, challenge, even mystify its readers” (Stephens & Watson, 1994, p. 1). Zoom and Re-Zoom did indeed inspire, challenge, and amuse the Grade 5 students. The books stimulated imagination, inquisitiveness, and interpretation. The children communicated their curiosity, enthusiasm, wonderment, surprise, and enjoyment in their written work. As they read the books, they also expressed their aesthetic responses physically through their facial expressions, gestures, and body language. Ethan’s final written response provides one more example of how powerfully Zoom and Re-Zoom evoked aesthetic response in the Grade 5 students.

Ethan (Z): In the first part of the book I didn’t really understand the book to the point that I do now. It was as though the whole world broke down into pieces so that I could look into it. It was as though the whole world froze for that one glimpse. To the mind it was like an atom bomb going off in my head. And all of a sudden I felt like I should slow down in life and just live life to the fullest because there might be one and only one glimpse and that would be just amazing. To me it was like perfectly timed clock work. By far it was the most powerful literature that I have ever read. It was really a philosophical book and it was great.

References


Children’s and Young Adult Literature References


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