Tips for Viewing Images in Picture Books

Using language to respond to images in picture books.

Representation
Movement
Shape
Setting
What is happening?
Vector
Symbols

Visual Literacy

Interaction
Shot distance
Expression
Angle
How do we relate
Gestures
Colour
and connect?
Gaze

Design
Salience
Layout
How does the design
Framing
create meaning?
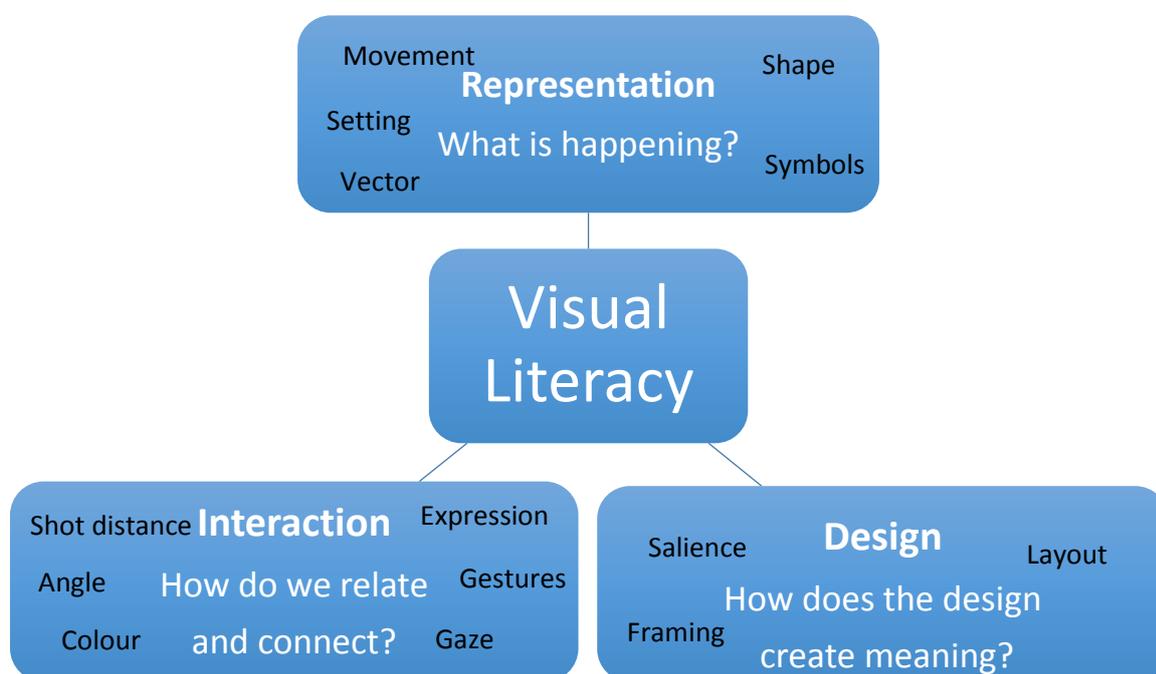
Adapted from Forrest, 2017; Callow, 2013; & McDonald, 2013

Visual Literacy helps us understand and describe features of a picture that create visual meaning. We learn who or what is in the picture, the activities involved, interactions between characters, emotions, and how the image catches our attention. We can learn to discover by looking deeper and thinking about what we see. Visual literacy is also referred to as visual grammar and visual language.
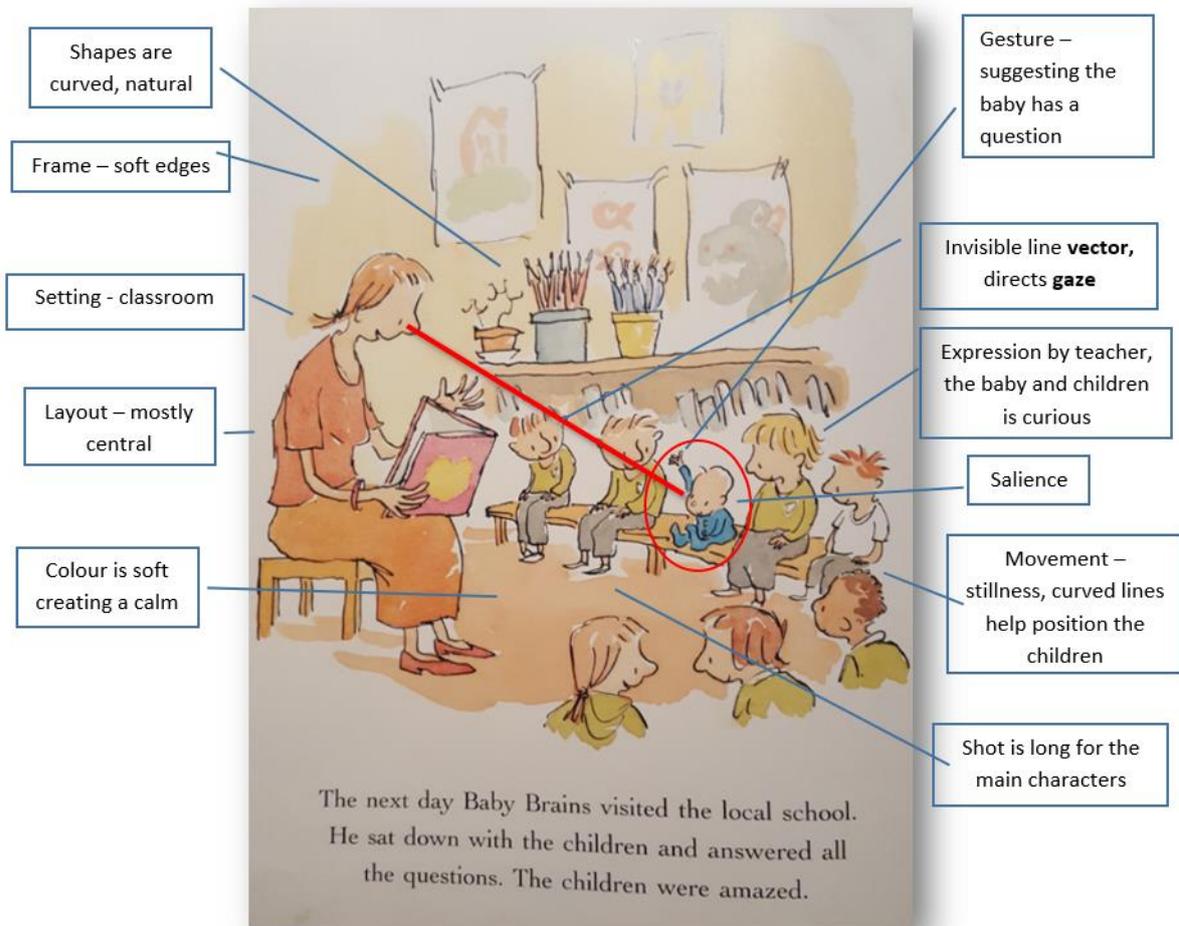
Representation

- **Setting:** where is the image set?

- **Movement:** curving lines suggest action, diagonal lines create a slope ascending (upward) or descending (downward) motion.

- **Vector:** a line that leads your eye from one part of the picture to another. It can be visible or invisible line, straight or curved and often shows where a character is looking or gazing.

- **Shape:** curved shapes are seen as more natural, straight-edged shapes such as squares or rectangles are more machine-like.

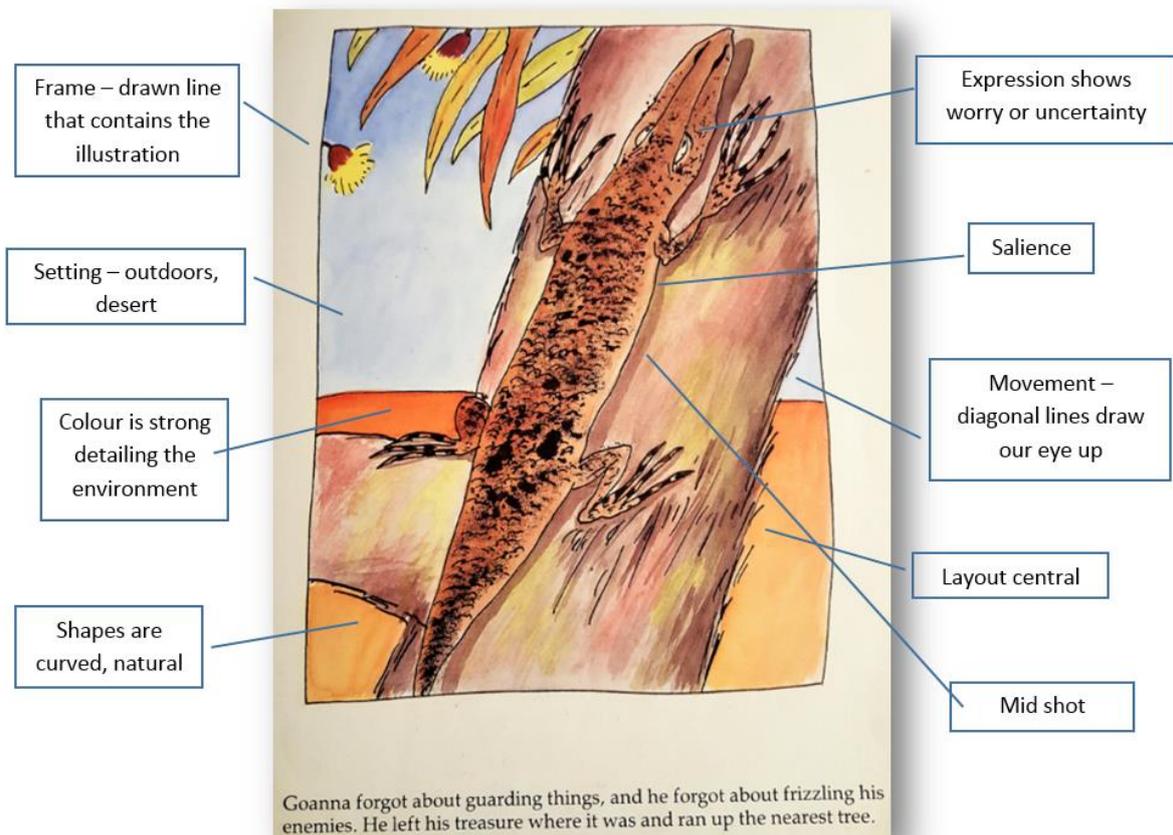- **Symbols:** objects that represent other ideas.

Interaction

- **Gaze:** where the charters is looking. *Demand* a character looks out at the viewer, demanding your attention. *Offer* the character is not looking at the viewer and you are encouraged to look around the picture.

- **Expression:** a character's look showing feelings and emotion.

- **Gestures:** movement of the hand, face or body that shows an idea or emotion.

- **Angles**: create importance of a character. Angles can be high, low or eye level. *Low angle* – the onlooker is low looking up at the image, a tall powerful character, high cliffs or tall building. *High angle* – the onlooker is looking down at the image. *Eye level* – an equal view between the image and onlooker.

- **Shot distance:** the distance of the character on the page connects a relationship with the onlooker. A *close shot* shows face or head and shoulders and creates affection or danger (depending on the image) between the onlooker and character. A *mid shot* is generally from the waist up and has less personal connection. *Long shots* show the full height of a person where they are often placed in a setting.

- **Colour:** can impact on emotion suggesting a mood, or creating a reaction to a person, place or object.

Design

- **Salience**: the part of the image that grabs your attention first. Salience is created by different features such as the size, sharpness or focus of people or objects; colour; placement of figures or object in the foreground. When you look at an image what your eye is drawn to first is Salient – the most noticeable or main feature of the image.

- **Framing:** a frame creates a border that connects or separates participants (characters, objects).

- **Layout:** where are participants (characters, objects) placed? Top/bottom, left/right, centre/margin positions.

Shapes are curved, natural

Frame – soft edges

Setting - classroom

Layout – mostly central

Colour is soft creating a calm

Gesture – suggesting the baby has a question

Invisible line **vector**, directs **gaze**

Expression by teacher, the baby and children is curious

Salience

Movement – stillness, curved lines help position the children

Shot is long for the main characters

The next day Baby Brains visited the local school. He sat down with the children and answered all the questions. The children were amazed.

From *Baby Brains* by Simon James

Frame – drawn line that contains the illustration

Setting – outdoors, desert

Colour is strong detailing the environment

Shapes are curved, natural

Expression shows worry or uncertainty

Salience

Movement – diagonal lines draw our eye up

Layout central

Mid shot

Goanna forgot about guarding things, and he forgot about frizzling his enemies. He left his treasure where it was and ran up the nearest tree.

From *Goanna* by Jenny Wagner

Salience

Gesture – hands positioned upwards towards the bird

Gaze is towards the bird drawing our eye to follow

Expression shows hope

Mid shot

Setting is outdoors, sun filtering through clouds creating brightness

Colour is dull, but the bird bright

Layout is central

Curved lines soften the tension

Raising the bird above his head, he lets it go.
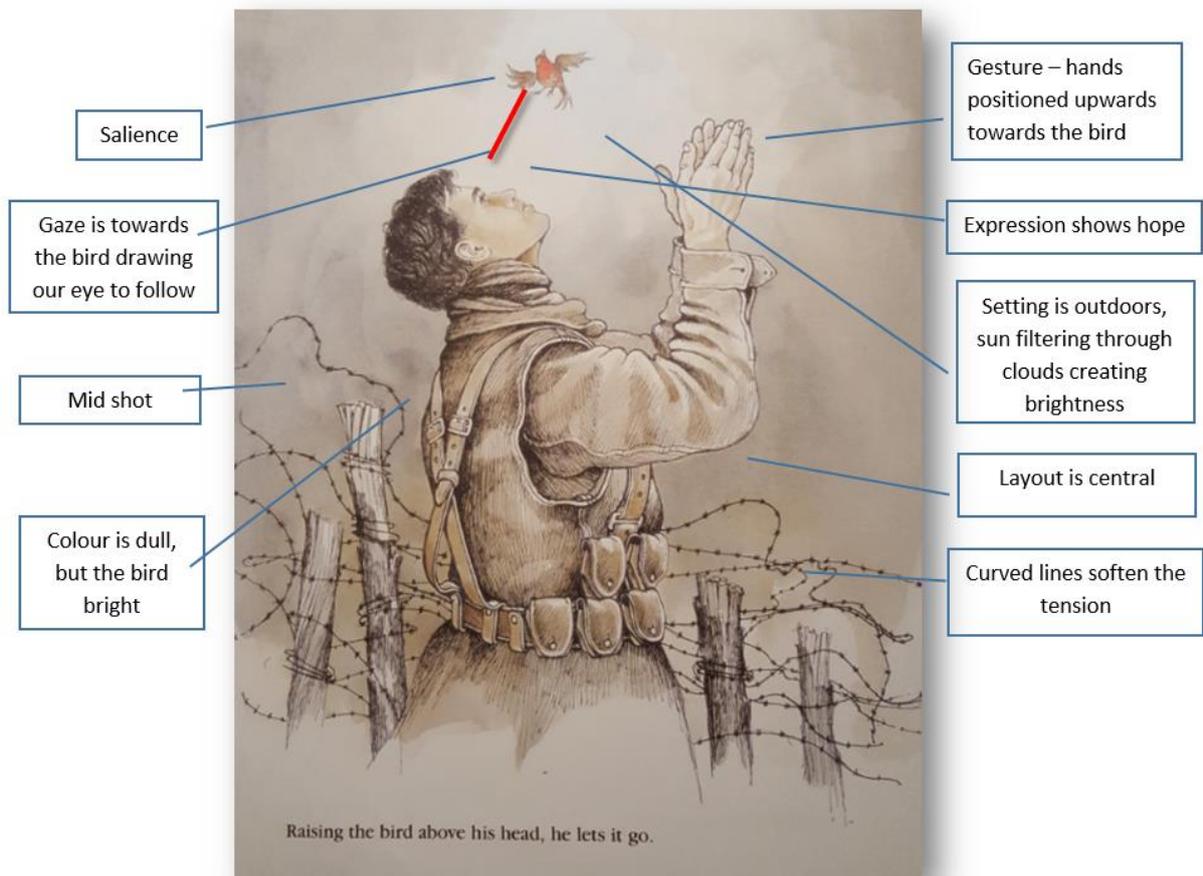
From *In Flanders Fields* by Norman Jorgensen

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