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## Professional Materials

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## Professional Materials Review

*Beyond words: Picture books for older readers and writers.* Written by S. Benedict and L. Carlisle (Eds.). Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 70 Court Street, Portsmouth NH 03801. ISBN: 0-435-08710-X. US\$16.00.

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Picture books are for everyone. I believed this before I read *Beyond Words: Picture Books for Older Readers and Writers*, but after reading it, I am even more convinced. The fourteen chapters in this edited book include articles by a variety of professionals, from university professors to teachers of middle school students to professional picture book authors and illustrators. The book begins with a preface and several chapters giving a rationale for using picture books with older students. It is stressed that picture books provide enjoyment, aesthetic value, information, imagery, an awareness of language, examples of form and structure, and models of innovation. Many picture books discuss mature themes and others often present interesting factual information appropriate for content area learning. In chapter two, Thomas Newkirk says our view of picture books must change. We need to consider picture books as literature, not just children's literature.

*Beyond Words* goes into great depth to describe why picture books should be a choice for older students. Picture

books can reacquaint students with old friends and encourage a new perception and a new depth into old ideas as well. Philosophical issues such as free will, being and nonbeing, dreaming and skepticism, and life-style choices are examples of themes found in picture books. Carlisle states that picture books provide economy in dealing with these issues so they can be studied easily and intelligently by older students.

Various chapters give practical ideas for using picture books with students. Chapter six, written by Tricia Crockett and Sara Weidhaas, two middle school students, describes steps to take when students are creating their own picture books. In chapter nine, librarian Carolyn K. Jenks gives suggestions of titles to use for teaching literary elements such as setting, theme, plot, style, point of view, and character development. Chapter ten, by Phyllis E. Brazee, deals with using picture books in science class, and Georgia Heard discusses the relationship between poetry and picture books in chapter eleven. In chapter thirteen, artist Ruth Tietjen Councell reaffirms the importance of illustrations. Middle school students certainly can learn through studying illustrations and doing their own illustrating. All of these chapters give the classroom teacher practical advice in using picture books in the classroom and the rationale needed to support and defend their use.

Other chapters give even more suggestions. Picture books can be studied as a genre and also can be used throughout the school year, mixed in with chapter books, for any topics or themes studied. Having nonfiction picture books available for use on a research report can help students write with depth and variety instead of copying the style of the encyclopedia. Students with learning disabilities may be able to use picture books to study a topic especially well, and if picture books are used liberally in the classroom anyway, they will

not feel awkward or ashamed. Even high school students can use picture books effectively. After all, many will be parents one day, and giving them a knowledge base and a love of picture books can help ensure they will read to their own children.

*Beyond Words* concludes with a substantial bibliography of picture books to use with older students.

This book leaves you with a hunger for more information about using picture books in the upper grades. If its main goal is to motivate further study of picture books for older students, then it has succeeded. After reading *Beyond Words*, I especially looked forward to sharing picture books with my seventh graders. The first picture book I read to them was *Faithful Elephants* (Tsuchiya, 1988). When I heard my students gasp and saw their wide eyes, my belief was confirmed. Picture books are for everyone.



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