

# Visualization Strategies for Reading Instruction

Saskatchewan School Library Association

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Editor's note: With the current emphasis on explicit teaching of reading strategies, many teacher librarians have become involved in finding appropriate resources. For the teachers at her school, teacher librarian Deanna Wees combed her collection for resources that lend themselves to demonstrating the visualization strategy. In this series of lessons, she suggests how to employ each resource and what activities students can do. Deanna has included the Dewey location code for each resource as well to enable her staff to find them easily. These dozen lessons do not have to follow any specific order. Because of the variety of materials she suggests, these activities could be adapted to any K to Grade 8 classroom.

## Lesson 1

### Resources

**How and why stories for reader's theatre      PROF 812.6 WOL**

How and why stories are usually short and very descriptive. Read a story aloud and then offer a few response choices:

- Draw the strongest image that you created in your mind from the story.
- Provide copies of the story for students who “hear a voice” they can connect with and would like to perform for the class. This could be done with the teacher or other students who had ideas about what the characters sounded like.
- Discuss what images students imagined from the story and how the author used language to make us “see” them.
  - Was the author good a description?
  - Was one part of the story especially helpful?
  - Make a list of the words that helped you create a picture in your head.
  - How did the “voice” of the characters help you create a picture?
  - How would you make the story better?

## Lesson 2

### Resources

Dog Food E FRE

Food for Thought E FRE

Can you see what I see? 793.73 WIC

“I spy” books 793.73 WIC

Many illustrators have fun substituting unusual objects in place of what we expect to see. This makes looking at these books fun and surprising. Some professional artists and optical illusion books use this technique too. These books actually teach our brain to see things in new ways.

Show the first few pages of one of the first two books suggested to your students. Let them “get” the idea behind what the illustrator’s technique is. After they have caught on, ask them how they would create the next page.

For example, in *Dog Food* the illustrator has used food to create different dogs. The first two-page spread says, “Good dog!” All the dogs look happy. On the next two pages, we see a change in “Bad dog” and “Mad dog.” Look at the how the animals are positioned. Where are they looking? Compare it to the first “Good dog” spread.

Ask the students how they would show a “Hot dog” and a “Chilly dog.” After they come up with some ideas, show them the next pages.

Pick other pages throughout the story for them to predict their own illustrations before showing the actual ones in the book.

Have students look at a sampling of fruits and vegetables and get them to think up a face or feeling suggested by them.

Try an art project like Walter Wick’s *I Spy* books. Provide a wide variety of objects and have the students create a simple picture.

## Lesson 3

### Resources

#### Poetry Books

One Leaf Rides the Wind 811.6 MAN

Simple poems are a great place to start. *One Leaf Rides the Wind* is a counting book set in a Japanese garden. Each page offers one simple three-line poem.

Read one page at a time. Repeat as needed to allow time for students to create an image in their mind. Ask volunteers to share their images.

You could have the students create their own picture from one of the poems.

Look for similar images around the school and take pictures to create your own version of the book.

For example: one flag, two older students helping a younger one, and so on.

## Lesson 4

### Resource

#### Life-Size Zoo

590 EAR

This oversized book shows animals or parts of animals from around the world at their real life size. Here are some questions to discuss with your group of students:

- How big do you think a panda bear's head is? Are they white on black or black on white?
- What do you think is in a zebra's ears to protect them from dust and bugs?
- What does a tiger's tongue do? Describe what a tiger's tongue would need to feel like in order to do this task well.
- How far can you stick out your tongue? Can anyone in your class touch their nose with their tongue? Giraffes need a long tongue to get at the leaves protected by the long thorns on the acacia tree.
- What do you think is inside the crest on top of the gorilla's head? Why do you think it is there? It is actually a bone. Only the males have this crest.
- Did you know a gorilla's DNA is a 98 -99% match to humans?
- Gorillas have individual fingerprints just like we do!

## Lesson 5

### Resources

#### Diaries and letter format books

##### Diary of a Spider

E CRO (Also Diary of a Worm and Diary of a Fly)

##### The Jolly Postman

PROF FIC AHL

Diaries and letters are great to use because they can "humanize" a character and add to the feeling that they are real.

*The Diary of a Spider (or one of the others)*

As the spider's life story unfolds, children can find some comparisons to their own life stories.

1. Create your own photo album/diary. Students could create a day in the life of their classroom or a day in the life of a student in their class.
2. Examine the illustrations for objects that the students recognize. How are these items used by the spiders in new or unusual ways? Give the class a number of objects and ask them to imagine how a spider might use the objects.
3. If you were a spider, who would be your best friend? Why would he or she be a good friend to choose? Who would not be a good choice for the best friend of a spider?

## Lesson 6

### Resource

#### A Very Unusual Dog      E LAR

In this story, the main character, Jonathan, has an imaginary dog for a pet.

Read the story to students but do not show them the picture of the dog at the end. Use visual hints from the story to “picture” Jonathan's dog. Is it a big or small dog? What colour do you think it might be?

Look through non-fiction books (636.7) about dogs to see many different dog breeds. Discuss which one might be Jonathan's dog.

Using these books for reference, have the students draw and colour the unusual dog from the story.

## Lesson 7

### Resource

#### Twelve Terrible Things

In the illustrations for this book, the author and illustrator, Marty Kelley, has done a great job making the reader feel that he or she is the child in the picture.

Predicting: Give students a sheet of paper on which to make their predictions about which “kid terrible” situations might appear in the book.

After reading the book, ask students to add to their list any new ideas they got from the story without duplicating the exact events from the story.

For example: they may have had a different pet die or hate eating another food besides gravy!

Put the students in small groups and have them pick their 12 best ideas to create a group version of *Twelve Terrible Things*. Students could then illustrate their own pictures or take photographs to illustrate their version.

Have students write their own warning letters too!

## Lesson 8

### Resources

**In the Woods: Who's Been Here? E GEO**

**In the Snow: Who's Been Here? E GEO**

**Around the World: Who's Been Here? E GEO**

**Around the Pond: Who's Been Here? E GEO**

All these stories are good for tapping into the brain. On a “walk through” or reading of each book, Students use the clues given on one page to figure out which animal will be revealed in a close up on the following page.

For example: bark gnawed off some branches...turns out to be a snowshoe hare!

## Lesson 9

### Resources

#### Amazing Animals Series

##### Snakes

**597.96 BOD**

This series offers non-fiction information on different animals in a simple format. One page contains a few lines of information with a full page photo on the opposite page.

Fold an 11 x 17 sheet of paper to get eight sections. Read the first full page spread to the students without showing the picture. As you read, have them draw a simple image from the description and information given. Ask the students which words helped them create their pictures.

Older students could write down the descriptive words in their squares.

Use the back of the sheet for longer books.

## Lesson 10

### Resources

Is It Rough? Is It Smooth? Is it Shiny?

E HOB

Tana Hoban has a large number of simple concept books available. Many of these require children to dig into their brains for visual and tactile information about the images they see in the book.

1. Ask students how they know the baby elephant is rough? What clues are there? What connections are they making to other objects that look like the elephant's skin?
2. How could we explain to someone how an apple feels?
3. What characteristics do chewing gum, roasted marshmallows and candy floss all have as we eat or chew them?

## Lesson 11

### Resources

What's Different?

E SIE

Spot the Differences 793.73 ROS

Simple or complex, comparing items to others or looking for differences are good exercises for the visual parts of our brain.

*What's Different?* is useful for young children to learn the idea of classifying objects by what they have in common – shape, use, colour and so on.

*Spot the Differences* strengthens our visual memory.

## Lesson 12

### Resources

Round Trip E JON (Try other books by Ann Jonas as well)

Optical Illusion Books found in the 152.14 section

*Round Trip* will fascinate children who haven't seen this type of book before. The illustrations are set up so at the end of the book you turn the book upside down and **keep reading** to finish the story. Students' love that they have been "fooled" once they see that each picture seems to change when turned upside down.

Use this opportunity to show them other optical illusions. As our brain gains experience seeing this way, these images become easier to interpret. Relate this skill to how we sometimes make quick judgments.

Author's note: A kit called *Nonfiction Reading and Writing Workshops Set B* has a section on Descriptive Writing that includes a comprehension strategy on visualizing (KIT 372.6 NON)

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