

Call for Papers - “Teaching (With) Picturebooks: Context, Competences, Criticism”

Symposium at the University of Rostock

25-26 November 2024

organized by Dr. Katja Schmidt & Dr. Hanne Bolze

Key note speakers:

Prof. Dr. Tobias Kurwinkel (Universität Hamburg)

Dr. Grit Bergner (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg)

As a medium, picturebooks are both tremendously popular and deceptively complex. Combining visual and verbal forms of communication, they cover different formats, topics and genres, and include categories such as board books, pop-up books, wordless picturebooks, and non-fiction picturebooks.

In Germany, picturebook research has by now been firmly established in German literary studies and teaching methodology, as well as in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) methodology. However, English literary studies have yet to include the medium in the canon of ‘serious’ literature. This workshop addresses this gap by exploring cross-disciplinary approaches to picturebook analysis.

From a literary studies perspective, picturebooks call for a multimodal analysis of the combination of text and image. The format may combine elements from the three main literary genres: poetry (through its use of sound and the visual design of the text), narrative (through its storytelling), and theatre (through its nonverbal elements, the stage-like composition of double-page spreads, and the drama of turning the page). Critical analysis of form and content reveals layers of meaning that belie picturebooks’ reputation as ‘simple texts’. In particular, picturebook approaches to pertinent topics and current contexts, such as climate crisis, war, marginalisation, or mental health, and the visual and verbal representations of voice, perspective, and framing found in the medium offer complex material for literary analysis.

From the perspective of teaching methodology, picturebooks represent a valuable resource for learning in the context of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. For example, they facilitate a natural and engaging language experience, thereby enhancing the development of linguistic skills and strategies. Equally important, they convey meaning for children to discover, thus supporting their cognitive, emotional, and social development. The use of picturebooks is not exclusive to primary education; rather, it offers significant opportunities for (lower) secondary education as well. It may even extend beyond the language classroom to encompass other subject areas, such as the arts, natural sciences, or social studies.

Combining the disciplines of literary studies and teaching methodology, we are looking for both theoretical reflections and concrete picturebook analyses that explore the 'toolkit' for picturebook analysis and expand the canon of anglophone picturebooks. Our hope is to establish a network of scholars and teachers, to further picturebook research in English literary studies and teaching methodology, and to boost the status of the picturebook medium in research and teaching.

Interested scholars, early career researchers and teachers are invited to submit 250-300-word abstracts for either

- a 20-minute presentation that explores anglophone picturebooks from teaching- methodology or literary-studies perspectives, or
- a 60-minute workshop that provides opportunities for the participants to jointly analyse and discuss (a) particular picturebook(s) from teaching-methodology and/or literary-studies perspectives.

Paper presentations will be given on November 25, 2024. Workshops will take place on November 26, 2024. Both papers and workshops may be given in German or English.

Please send the abstract of your proposed paper or workshop with a brief biography (50 words) to Hanne Bolze (hanne.bolze@uni-rostock.de) by **September 9, 2024**.