

Wordless books for classrooms with children and young migrants

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Abstract

Wordless picturebooks and comics use essentially the resources of visual language (line, colour, texture, composition...) and the resources of editorial design (format, type of paper, binding...) to tell a story. Wordless graphic stories are not just for preschoolers or for those who do not know how to read. Neither are they just a preliminary step for reading books with words. They are quite simply another type of book. In order to read wordless books and comics the reader needs to have the appropriate cultural baggage and it is useful to have some experience with interpreting images (Bosch, 2015).

In the context of a classroom with recently-arrived migrant pupils, wordless books could become a particularly useful and highly recommendable resource as they allow mediators to deal with subjects without the child or young person having to be able to read the language of the host country. Thanks to these books, those children and young people who have not yet mastered their new languages, can feel that they are able to interpret the graphic signs and thus follow the stories the images tell (Arizpe, 2012; Arizpe et Al., 2014).

All manner of stories are told in wordless picturebooks and comics. To a greater or lesser extent titles can be found that tell adventure stories, fantastic tales, dramas, romances, comedies, war stories... Any of these books could find a place in a classroom catering for young migrants. The mediator has only to select the titles according to the aims set, the subject matter, the complexity of the work or the capabilities of the reader.

Here we will present a selection of titles arranged into three large categories, based on the functions outlined by Marion Durand (1984) with respect to books for pre-readers, and organized around the verbs *recognize*, *identify* and *imagine*. In the «recognize» category we cite examples of documentary, chronicle and panoramic books that could be used in a multicultural classroom to help recently-arrived migrants learn basic vocabulary and familiarize themselves with the realities of the host country, with its customs and traditions. The stories selected in the «identify» category tell of migrant experiences. The reader, through these stories, is able to form an empathic relationship with the characters by identifying with those characters or becoming caught up affectively with them. «Imagine», the third category, implies projecting, inventing, creating. To this end we have chosen stories that open doors to other, possible worlds; wordless picturebooks and comics that allow us to enter dreamlike, parallel, fantastic places.

This selection of books complements the one we presented in the international meeting *Publishing about Immigration* (Bosch, 2019). Our intention is that they should be available in the libraries of primary and secondary schools and used as a further resource for managing migration and welcoming children and young people, regardless of whether they are migrants or not.

References

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