Can You Picture That?
Analyzing the Potential of Picturebooks for the Upper Secondary EFL Classroom

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Fakultät für Kulturwissenschaften

Begutachter: Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Werner Delanoy
Institut: Anglistik und Amerikanistik

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I have always been an avid reader and art lover. As many children, I started reading, looking at, and enjoying picturebooks when I was very little. I loved the bright colors and rhythmical texts of picturebooks that presented themselves in all shapes and forms. However, as the years passed I too turned away from the magical illustrations and stories of picturebooks to focus on longer texts with fewer pictures. Who would have thought that a change of location would also change or more specifically open my mind to the potential of picturebooks again. I re-discovered picturebooks not only for me as an adult and art-loving reader but also as a learning source for my future EFL and L1 students. For this realization and the inspiration for this thesis, I have but one person to thank.

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Abbreviations
EFL…. English as a Foreign Language
L1……First Language
L2……Second Language
Introduction

A world shaped by “visual imagery” (Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson 2003, 758) and a society influenced by multimodality, complexity, and global connections present great challenges for the people that are part of it, and for educators especially. This is why scholars, such as Delanoy (2017), insist on adapted literature and language learning that complies with the new ways of meaning-making (cf. 13). Integral parts of such an adapted approach to language learning and literature teaching are visual formats that nurture the skills and competences students need in order to succeed. Picturebooks are a promising option and an ideal example for a visual format that can be utilized for said teaching purposes.

The idea to include picturebooks in a classroom setting is not new. However, the main focus of research so far has predominantly been on their use in the primary context. This can be observed in regard to first language (L1) English language arts classrooms as well as English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. As picturebooks are valuable objects to teach about literary form, language, content, stories, and different worlds/cultures/perspectives (cf. Bishop and Hickman 1992, 10) on a secondary level in particular, they are the main object of interest for this thesis. Consequently, the main goal of this thesis is to examine and present the potential of picturebooks in regard to language learning in an upper secondary EFL classroom.

To answer the question of the picturebook format’s educational potential, this thesis is divided into two major parts. The first part is focused on picturebooks and language learning in theory and practice, whilst the second part is dedicated to an exemplary analysis of a picturebook and the activities that could be used to integrate the book into the upper secondary EFL classroom.

The first chapter of part one deals with picturebooks as a literary format. Before the potential of picturebooks for the EFL classroom can be assessed, the term needs to be defined. Furthermore, the format is separated from similar visual formats that have become more and more popular in the classroom setting, such as comics and graphic novels. Another aspect to be considered is the intended audience of picturebooks as this seems to be one of the principal issues that still causes debates amongst experts and in the general public. Subchapter number four will examine typical and prominent picturebook features. First, I will analyze what picturebooks look like and how they are formatted. Second, their multimodality will be
addressed. Finally, the matter of genres, topics and themes will be discussed. Subchapter number five is about the different types of picturebooks. The final subchapter acknowledges critical voices and reservations that may have prevented educators from working with picturebooks so far but hopefully will be refuted or at least weakened by the end of the thesis.

The aim of the second chapter is to present the status quo of the theories and approaches in English language teaching as well as literature teaching and learning. Both are particularly relevant for the overall topic. Subchapter number one starts with an overview of the shift from the acclaimed principles of communicative language learning to Claire Kramsch’s (2006) theory of the importance of fostering symbolic competence. The focus of the second subchapter lies in the various literacies that are regarded to be crucial in society and are developed, trained, and supported through teaching literature in the ELT classroom. This chapter also introduces the new concept of Multiliteracies presented by Cope and Kalantzis (2015). In addition, subchapter number three highlights the significance of language creativity in language learning. The last approach to be explored is the concept of aesthetic reading.

Chapter three is dedicated to the potential learning opportunities through picturebooks in the upper secondary EFL classroom. To begin with, there are four pedagogical objectives that will be reflected in detail. The first one is language awareness and development including elements such as vocabulary expansion and the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The second objective involves literary literacy and storytelling through picturebooks as authentic mentor texts. Objective number three is visual literacy, which is exceptionally interesting in regard to visual formats such as picturebooks. The final objective is concerned with the ways students can be motivated and encouraged to participate or engage in the language lesson. Empowerment is another keyword, elaborated on by Bland (2013), that will be of relevance in this subchapter. Naturally, these are only a fraction of possible learning objectives for the use of picturebooks. They are, however, the most substantial ones in accordance with the focus of this thesis. The next subchapter expands on the challenges teachers may face when they have decided to work with picturebooks. The first challenge is how to select the right book and the second challenge is how to overcome the prejudices against the format, if students are reluctant and unwilling to cooperate. The final subchapter contrasts picturebooks and textbooks or course books. Part of this subchapter is about the differences between the formats but also the arguments of why picturebooks can be a perfect addition to EFL lessons.
The second part of the thesis presents my practical approach. It includes an analysis of *The Word Collector* based on Staiger’s (2014) five-dimensional model for picturebook analysis. The five dimensions to be examined are the narrative, verbal, visual, intermodal, and paratextual dimension. Following that, the particular learning potential and possible challenges in regard to the exemplary book will be addressed. Ultimately, the third subchapter contains exemplary suggestions for pre-reading, reading, and post-reading activities. Moreover, it includes project ideas which may be implemented in an upper secondary EFL classroom.

Lastly, this thesis concludes with the final chapter reflecting on the findings that have been presented throughout the text. It also suggests further research questions and topics that may be of interest and contribute to an increasing implementation of picturebooks in the upper secondary EFL classroom.
I Picturebooks and Language Learning

The first part of my thesis is concerned with picturebooks in connection to language learning and will start by examining picturebooks as a literary format in the following chapter.

1 Picturebooks as a Literary Format

During my research for this thesis, it became clear that there are two ways of writing the term: either separate as *picture book* or together as *picturebook*. Bland (2014a) states that the two words should be linked, as this tends to be the practice “in recent scholarship to emphasize the word/image interdependency” (1). Therefore, Bland’s suggestion, which is also supported by Nikolajeva and Scott (2006), will be adopted for this thesis as it seems reasonable to highlight the connection of words and pictures, which will be an important topic in this chapter as well as throughout this thesis in general.

My understanding of picturebooks is that they are a literary format. This claim is supported by Giorgis (1999, 51) and Staiger (2014), who stresses that picturebooks are not a genre but a medium and in this sense a format of children’s literature (cf. 12).

Even though there might be critics that do not consider picturebooks or children’s literature as real literature, I firmly believe that they are. Bishop and Hickman (1992) share this notion and argue that picturebooks as part of children’s literature are “real literature, worthy of study, differing from other literature only in its adaptations to an implied primary audience of young, less experienced readers” (2). This argument highlights that although children’s literature might be aimed at a younger and inexperienced readership, it still has a lot of potential for older readers which will be analyzed in the following chapters.

Even though the focus of this thesis is on picturebooks as a literary format in children’s and young adult literature, it is interesting to consider Hunt’s (2004) statement that children’s literature is not only “(among many other things) a body of texts (in the widest senses of that word), [but also] an academic discipline, an educational and social tool, an international business and a cultural phenomenon” (xiii). This broad description draws attention to the various aspects connected to children’s and young adult literature and picturebooks in particular. In addition, it highlights the importance these texts have for education and socialization. This is also one of the reasons why they have a lot of potential for language teaching purposes.
As far as the origin and development of the format is concerned, Watson’s (2001) or Whalley’s (2004) detailed overviews can be consulted.

### 1.1 Defining the Term

Coming back to the attempt of defining the term, the following definition by the Oxford Dictionary can be used as a starting point. According to the Oxford Dictionary, a picturebook is “a book consisting wholly or partly of pictures, esp. one written for children” (The Oxford Dictionary, n.d.). This basic definition focuses on two simple aspects. First, that picturebooks contain pictures. They can also consist solely of pictures, which indicates that there are picturebooks without text as well as picturebooks with text and images. Second, it suggests that they are mainly intended for children. Both aspects need to be and will be discussed in the following subchapters.

A narrower definition which also includes the format of picturebooks, the relationship between image and text, as well as a characterization of picturebooks as forms of art is given by Evans (2013). She states that “the picturebook is an art form that combines visual and verbal narratives in a book format. A true picturebook tells the story both with words and illustrations, sometimes they work together or sometimes separately” (240). The fact that picturebooks are supposed to be art has been a topic of discussion but will be seen as a given in the understanding of the term for this thesis. In addition, this definition already hints at the possible ways text and images do or do not work together in order to tell a story. This will be brought up again in subchapter 1.4.2 and 1.5 as well as in the definition presented by Bishop and Hickman (1992). They claim that “[f]or purists, a picture book is a picture storybook, a fiction book with a dual narrative, in which both the pictures and the text work interdependently to tell a story” (Bishop and Hickman 1992, 2). This purist definition focuses on picturebooks telling a fictional story, as well as on the interdependence between the pictures and the text. In doing so, this definition distinguishes picture storybooks from illustrated books, which are books with pictures that are not essential to the story (cf. ibid). Furthermore, this definition does not include types of picturebooks other than fictional storybooks. Yet, there are various other types which will be discussed in chapter 1.5.

Another interesting aspect noted by Bishop and Hickman (1992) is that there is no consensus on the definition of picturebooks (cf. 2). This is, why the aim of this chapter is not to find the perfect definition but to present an overview of some of the academic approaches.
 Obviously, different scholars focus on different aspects. However, many authors, such as Bishop and Hickman, seem to emphasize the relationship between text and pictures in picturebooks. Watson (2001) belongs to the same category. His definition also includes the text-image interdependence as well as the difference between picturebooks and illustrated books. Watson states that picturebooks are:

“Books which rely for their effects upon an interplay of pictures and words. Unlike illustrated books, where the pictures tend to serve a prior verbal text, picturebooks require that the pictures are as significant within the overall text as the words and that both should be physically close enough together for a reader to apprehend readily their mutual influence. The whole text in picturebooks is thus composite in nature although the form itself is in fact extremely flexible and varied” (Watson 2001, 557).

Particularly interesting is the comment about the importance of pictures and text being physically close to each other. This aspect seems obvious and yet it should be underlined. Readers can only grasp the whole story and meanings if text and related pictures work together and are in fact on the same page or double-spread. Watson further notes that the format allows authors and illustrators to choose between a variety of ways to create the special text-image relationship. An example for such a text-image relationship will be presented and analyzed in chapter 4.

Neither Bishop and Hickman’s nor Watson’s definition include the intended audience or different types of picturebooks. This might be due to the fact that both definitions are rather broad and general. However, both definitions can be used as an introduction to the topic and a basis for understanding picturebooks. Giorgis (1999) includes the intended audience indirectly when she explains picturebooks as “the format that the author and illustrator have chosen in which to tell a story and [which] is generally not indicative of reading ability or interest or interest level” (51). Subsequently, picturebooks can be intriguing for any reader, no matter their age, reading skill, or language level. This realization will be of further importance when critical voices are addressed in chapter 1.6.

1.2 Picturebooks – Comics – Graphic Novels

Following the attempt of defining the term picturebooks, there is the need to compare them with similar literary forms, such as comics and graphic novels. Even though there are some distinct differences, this subchapter will demonstrate that there are also many similarities between the art forms. Nowadays the distinction between picturebooks and graphic novels is quite challenging as the boundaries seem to become more and more blurry (cf. Burwitz-Melzer
2014, 61). Burwitz-Melzer (2014) even states that “[t]hey are so close, indeed, that it is sometimes difficult to decide whether a book belongs to one group or the other” (61).

As a starting point for the comparison of the three formats, it is sensible to consider the findings of two experts who are frequently quoted in academic debates: Will Eisner and Scott McCloud. Eisner started the reflection on this specific art form, while McCloud extended his theories (cf. Evans 2013, 235).

McCloud’s definition of comics is widely quoted and shall be presented as a basis for discussion. First of all, he warns that, “[i]f people failed to understand comics, it was because they defined what comics could be too narrowly!” (McCloud 1994, 3). To him, comics are “sequential art” (ibid, 6), a term he adopted from Will Eisner which refers to at least two pictures (cf. ibid, 5). McCloud takes his definition further than Eisner and includes his own critique of other prominent explanations, which he presents in his comic style book in an almost illegible way. He criticizes that common misconceptions foster the notion that comics are merely about superheroes, villains, action, or cute animal characters, and that they are bad for young readers (cf. ibid, 9). His final definition of comics is: “Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (ibid). One of the main points he makes is that comics present pictures in a sequenced manner. Another important aspect is that the pictures provoke an aesthetic reaction. All of these aspects can be applied to comics, graphic novels, and in a general sense to picturebooks as well.

However, Fuchs (2017) argues that there is a difference “in the sequence of pictures and the depiction of time and movement” (30). Regarding the sequence of pictures, it can be stated that comics and graphic novels present a lot more images on one spread and double-spread than ‘typical’ picturebooks. As Fuchs notes, “[i]n picturebooks there is usually one picture per page or double page […]” (ibid). As a consequence, there is also not as much movement. Furthermore, according to Fuchs, “images in picturebooks may cover longer periods than the ones in comics or graphic novels. The continuing narration may then complement time gaps in the visual depictions” (ibid). Based on this observation, the textual element in picturebooks can be given a very important role when it contributes to filling or explaining visual time gaps. Yet this only applies to picturebooks which present both images and text. There are, however, types
of picturebooks which do not include both and will be further mentioned and explained in chapter 1.5.

Another difference between picturebooks and comics, according to Fuchs (2017), is connected to their “paratext, which means that picturebooks are printed in various formats and sizes” (30). This difference, if it is only concerned about the literal format and size, however, is not as convincing as other arguments because comics and graphic novels might also vary in formats and sizes, as a browse through a bookshop demonstrates. Yet, if format includes the design of comics, which is determined by frames (cf. ibid), then it could indeed be seen as a distinctive feature.

As Evans (2013) points out, “[t]he key to comics is their format, what they look like on the page” (236). This is also what McCloud stresses. Features which are typical for comics and make them special are the frames around the pictures, which form the different sections or “panels”, and the space between the panels, “the gutter” (McCloud 1994, 66) which is the background with hidden events and meanings. Panels occur in all size and shapes as described by McCloud (cf. ibid, 99). In comparison to comics, most pictures in picturebooks are borderless, although there are exceptions, such as Anthony Browne’s (1992) Zoo where some pictures are framed.

Thus far, the focus has been on the comparison of picturebooks and comics. Nevertheless, graphic novels are another comparable format that should be mentioned separately, as they have become very popular with readers and also teachers in recent years. There are various articles on graphic novels in an academic and educational context for L1 as well as EFL classrooms (e.g. Hallett 2012, Hecke 2012, Lippitz and Schallegger 2017). Burwitz-Melzer (2014) defines the format as follows:

“Graphic novels like comic books and comic strips all belong to the family of comics, that is to the family of sequential arts (Eisner), yet they are longer than the usual 32 pages standard comic book. Usually, a graphic novel is a collection of comics that offers some form of continuity: it may be a single story, yet it may also be a collection of only loosely related comic strips. This umbrella definition leaves the question of genres undecided – on purpose” (Burwitz-Melzer 2014, 60).

Hence, graphic novels broadly belong to the same family as comics. Their length exceeds the number of pages of comics but also of picturebooks. The continuing story is a feature that picturebooks and graphic novels share. Also, the fact that graphic novels can be of any genre is something they have in common with picturebooks. Most of the aspects, such as the number of pictures on one page, the display of time and movement and the existence of panels distinguish
graphic novels from picturebooks in the same way as comics. Nevertheless, all three formats are not too different.

Burwitz-Melzer (2014) adds one major similarity: “[i]n picturebooks and graphic novels both text systems are intricately linked and work together. The ways in which they do so depend on the complex text-picture relationship in the individual picturebook or graphic novel” (58). Both formats can present different text systems that are connected to each other and need to be deciphered in order to create meaning. How this process might work and a more detailed discussion of the complex text-picture relationship in picturebooks will be part of chapter 1.4.2.

Defining picturebooks and differentiating them from comics and graphic novels is not easy. At this point, it should be mentioned that a differentiation gets even more challenging due to boundaries being blurred intentionally in texts that Evans (2013) calls “fusion texts” (239). Evans describes these texts as an evolved hybrid form, a mixture of features of all of the three forms of illustrated texts (cf. ibid). Such texts are often ambiguous and might break with expected norms in terms of perspectives, layout, illustrations, and text (cf. ibid, 243). The phenomenon of fusion texts might seem to be new, however Evans refers to Eisner who already noticed the creative crossing of elements from different visual narrative forms (cf. ibid, 240-241). This makes the development less surprising but definitely worth further examination. As they are combining multimodal features of picturebooks, comics, and graphic novels, fusion texts might be more challenging for readers but may be even more interesting and appealing for students and teachers in an educational context.

Summing up, picturebooks fit the criteria of a broader definition of the comic art form, but the format is where they commonly differ. There might be picturebooks that resemble comics and graphic novels in their style and might even include the distinctive panel form, but in general they do look different on the page. The next chapters about intended audiences, features, and types of picturebooks can be seen as an extension to the attempt of defining the term.

1.3 Intended Audiences

“Traditionally, picture books have been conceived of as books for the very young, yet this is no longer so. Today, picture books exist for all ages, and they are an art form that challenges readers on all competence levels” (Birketveit 2015, 2).
This quote by Birgetveit sums up the development and shift in the history of picturebook reception. And yet, according to Anstey and Bull (2004), “[t]he issue of the intended audience of picture books is still debated” (328). The notion that picturebooks are intended for children, and children only, is still common and will be addressed again in chapter 1.6. In fact, particular picturebooks might indeed be written especially for early readers or parents who will read picturebooks to their little ones as bedtime stories. However, literary research proves that a generalization of ‘the’ picturebook audience cannot be made.

Anstey and Bull (2004) insist that, “because of the blurring of boundaries between picture books and other genres, and between adult and children’s literature, […] the notion that picture books are only for younger readers is difficult to maintain” (328-329). Even though the location of picturebooks in the children’s literature section in most bookstores might suggest otherwise, many modern picturebooks are not written solely for a young audience. Anstey and Bull even suggest that the discussion and “issues of audience and age with regard to picture books has become largely irrelevant” (ibid, 329). For them it is obvious that the whole process of reading is determined by culture and society and that picturebooks are able to change and adapt accordingly (cf. ibid). Thus, readers can enjoy these books and benefit from them no matter their age. However, for this thesis, it seems to be important to include at least a brief discussion of possible audiences and the scholastic debate in order to support the analysis of the potential of picturebooks for older readers and EFL language learners.

Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) use the term “dual audience” and elaborate that, “[m]any picturebooks are clearly designed for both small children and sophisticated adults, communicating to the dual audience at a variety of levels” (21). Taking this even further, it can be noted that depending on the age, experience, and mindset of the reader, picturebooks offer insight and pleasure not only to dual but multiple audiences. Part of these multiple audiences are, for example, young children, adolescents, adults, seniors, and of course, second and foreign language learners.

Indeed, children are one of the main intended audiences for many picturebook authors and publishing houses, even though parents/relatives/family friends are the ones to select, buy, and read the books out loud. Nodelman (2004) claims, “the intended audience of picture books is by definition inexperienced – in need of learning how to think about their world, how to see and understand themselves and others” (157). Hence, picturebooks present concepts of the
world, values, identity, and other important topics especially for a young and learning audience. Nodelman (2004) adds that picturebooks are in fact “a significant means by which we integrate young children into the ideology of our culture” (157). As a result, even the simplest pictures and texts can have an impact. Therefore, Nodelman warns, “we need to make ourselves aware of the complex significations of the apparently simple and obvious words and pictures” (ibid).

Older children, adolescents, college students, and adults can be avid readers of picturebooks as well. Murphy (2009) describes the typical characteristics of picturebooks for adolescent readers. They are usually “longer, have more complex text and themes, and deal with topics that are more abstract and more intellectually demanding” (24).

Evans (2013) and Bishop and Hickman (1992) come to a similar conclusion. Evans (2013) highlights the complexity of picturebooks and comics which are very often engaged with difficult issues and critical messages (cf. 233). Bishop and Hickman (1992) also detect differences within the format in regard to “content, length or complexity, and sophistication” (8). This is why certain picturebooks can be very interesting for adults. Even if they are more complex, they are still aesthetically fascinating and because of their brevity do not appear to be a challenge right away.

Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) note that in contrast to young children, more experienced readers are familiar with conventions regarding books and reading techniques. This influences how they perceive and interpret picturebooks (cf. 21). Children and older readers can look at and read the same picturebook and have very different experiences.

Giorgis (1999) adds that specific illustrations offer tempting “detail and subtleties” (51) and Murphy (2009) reiterates that picturebooks “appeal to early adolescent students because of their interesting artwork, accessible language, and brief text, which stimulate enjoyment” (24). Summing up, adolescents might like reading picturebooks because of their aesthetics and are not likely to be threatened by shorter texts, but rather entertained.

Moreover, especially because of the topic of this thesis, there is mention of second or foreign language learners and readers. It has to be considered that, as Bland (2014b) points out, “[t]he second language reader is often a couple of years older than the typical mother-tongue reader of the same book” (85). English picturebooks considered for young English L1 readers might be interesting and rewarding for older readers with another mother tongue as long as their topics and themes are complex and their illustrations intriguing.
After describing some of the multiple audiences of picturebooks, it has become clear that it is a broad topic to discuss and as long as there are critics, it is important to present reasons and arguments for the fact that picturebooks are indeed suitable for readers of all age groups.

1.4 Features

As Bishop and Hickman (1992) notice, quite often any book that fits the picturebook format is considered to be a picturebook (cf. 2). To decide what is typically seen as the picturebook format, the following subchapters will examine some characteristics, namely picturebook anatomy, multimodality, as well as genres, topics, and themes.

1.4.1 Picturebook Anatomy

This chapter will focus on picturebook anatomy, which means the picturebook format and its various parts. Bishop and Hickman (1992) list characteristics, which can be considered to be distinctive of the picturebook format. These characteristics include the number of pages, the presence of pictures/illustrations, and the brevity of text (cf. 3). According to Bishop and Hickman, picturebooks are “usually thirty-two pages long, although they may be as short as twenty-four or as long as forty-eight pages; pictures appear on every page or double page spread, with the pictures taking up most of the space; text is relatively brief” (ibid). Murphy (2009) gives the same average page length as well as layout suggestion, explaining pictures can be placed on just one page or the whole double page spread (cf. 20).

The title of this subchapter and term picturebook anatomy is taken from Mourão (2014) who analyzes the different parts of a picturebook in detail (cf. 72-78). According to the scholar, every book “has a cover: this can be a hardcover or a paperback one. In hardcover editions, there is often a jacket or dust cover, which wraps around the hardcover to protect it” (ibid, 72). Hardcover editions tend to be more expensive, between 15 and 20 Euros, and paperbacks can be found for seven to ten Euros.

Following the cover, there are separate sheets of paper which are called “end papers” and are “parts of the binding, glued to the cover and the pages of the book and literally holding the book as object together” (Mourão 2014, 72). Moreover, they are often the place where the story begins, “so one can say that the narrative starts with the endpapers” (Birketveit 2015, 5).

The whole book can be further divided into “front matter, the body of the book and back matter” (Mourão 2014, 72). Part of the front matter can be up to seven pages that contain
information such as the title of the book, the names of authors, illustrators, and publishing
details as well as dedications. These pages can be called: “half title page”, “title page”,
“copyright page” and “dedication” (Mourão 2014, 72). Mourão mentions that all of these pages
might or might not be illustrated (cf. ibid).

Mourão (2014) further notes that the anatomy of a book and the whole paratext, consisting
of peritext and epitext (terms introduced by Genette 1997), can be brought to readers’ attention
and discussed in a classroom setting (cf. 73). According to Genette (1997), the peritext includes
texts that are part of a book but not part of the story, such as titles or prefaces. The epitext
consist of additional texts as well, but those texts are not part of the book itself. An example of
an epitext would be an interview with an author about the book (cf. 23; 344). This is important
as it is part of a bigger picture of how books are designed and how they work. Mourão (2014)
adds “that children pay particular attention to the peritextual elements of a picturebook,
especially when they are given the opportunity to use them to predict and confirm meaning, as
well as to put to use any words they know in English” (73). The use of peritext to make
predictions is surely helpful for EFL as well as other readers.

Single Illustrations can be either found on each page or one big picture can cover the whole
double-spread. They are mostly colorful. Still, there are examples with mellow colors or even
black and white pictures, as for example The Black Book of Colors by Menena Cottin and
Rosana Faría (2008).

Fuchs (2017) states that a picturebook can be written and illustrated by the same person or
different people. In addition, some author-illustrators also illustrate texts by other authors.
Every artist has her or his own preferences. Sometimes the decision is even made by the
publishers (cf. 31, and Nikolajeva and Scott 2006, 16). This factor is important because it can
have an effect on the design, the narrative, the storylines, the perspectives, the relationship
between text and pictures, and all in all, the effect a book might have on its readers. As Fuchs
(2017) explicates, “with the choice of a certain point of view, the illustrator suggests different
options of emotional involvement for the reader” (31). This can be crucial as it may influence
the text-picture relationship, which is an important feature of picturebooks and will be
examined in the next subchapter.
1.4.2 Multimodality

Almost every definition of picturebooks includes their multimodality. The two most common “modes of representation […] would be] the visual and the verbal” (Birketveit 2015, 3). Staiger (2014) declares that the combination and interdependence of visual and verbal codes which have to be decoded by the readers are, in fact, what make picturebooks so special and interesting (cf. 12). This is why the relation between these two semiotic systems (cf. ibid), will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Anstey and Bull (2004) examine the relationship between text and image and how it developed over time. Through presenting definitions of picturebooks which go back to the 1960s, they demonstrate the changes in perception of the function illustrations have had and still have in picturebooks now. At some point, “the illustrations were seen more as a work of art rather than a different text that had its own role to play in the construction of the narrative” (Anstey and Bull 2004, 328). However, this perception has changed and illustrations are not only seen as constructing the story together with the texts but as being able “to provide additional meaning and clarity to the narrative” (ibid).

The text-image relationship is also stressed by Nodelman (2004). He includes the target audience in his introductory definition of the format and argues that picturebooks are suitable for children especially because it is assumed “that pictures communicate more naturally and more directly than words, and thus help young readers make sense of the texts they accompany” (Nodelman 2004, 155). Nevertheless, he continues to question this assumption and argues that without the ability to understand different cultural and stylistic conventions, pictures cannot be interpreted (cf. ibid). He claims:

“In order to make sense of this apparently straightforward picture, then, I must have knowledge of differing styles and their differing purposes, and perform the complex operation of interpreting different parts of the pictures in different ways” (Nodelman 2004, 155).

This can be a challenge for children, as the ability to interpret pictures relies on well-developed visual literacy which consists of all the skills described by Nodelman in the quote above and will be further examined in chapter 3.

Evans (2013) examines the development of visual narratives and their similarities. She argues that most illustrated texts “exhibit a multimodal blend of different forms of
communication, however, it is the visual images that are the common factor; combined with words they communicate with the reader to a greater or lesser degree” (245).

This is what connects picturebooks, comics, and graphic novels. They all are “visual narratives” (Evans 2013, 245). They tell stories by combining visuals, whether there is increased attention to the text or no text at all. In contemporary media, the interactive picturebook is also increasingly common and adds another modal layer to discover.

It is important to note that the different modes all contribute to the narrative. Readers rely on them to develop their interpretation and understanding of the texts. As many scholars, such as Birketveit (2015), highlight, each mode has “gaps” (3). These gaps have to be filled by reading, decoding, and understanding the information presented by both semiotic systems. In regard to the content of each system, Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) state that images in picturebooks usually display visual things such as surroundings or physical appearances of characters, whereas words include more narrative information for example about relations and feelings (cf. 1).

In order to reach an understanding of a picturebook, a reader usually “moves back and forth between images and verbal text” (Birketveit 2015, 3). This is also accentuated by Staiger (2014, 13) and it clearly separates the process of reading a picturebook from reading other narrative texts, such as novels or even a comic.

Hassett and Scott Curwood (2009) focus on the interactive elements and ways of reading and interpreting multimodal texts, such as picturebooks. Even though their arguments are made with picturebooks for small children and the primary classroom in mind, it is still true for more complex picturebooks. They explain the moving between text and pictures during the reading process by stating that “[m]ultimodal texts include various pathways to follow, parallel displays of information, extensive cross-referencing elements, evocative graphics and images that extend, and often, replace, the printed word as the primary carrier of meaning” (Hassett and Scott Curwood 2009, 271). Picturebook authors and illustrators have to develop the different paths and one could suggest that the more complex the paths, cross-references, and illustrations are, the more challenging the whole decoding process can become. This also supports the view that picturebooks without written text are not at all simpler but can in fact be even more challenging and complex than books with both images and words.
Until now, it has only been mentioned that there are two modes, the visual and verbal, and that these two modes interact. Bland (2015) offers deeper insight into the nature of this interaction when she states that

“[m]ultimodal texts, which contribute to the narrative in multiple modes – such as the pictures, the words, the design and peritext of picturebooks – do not however reiterate identical messages in each mode. The messages may overlap, complement, amplify or contradict each other; […]” (Bland 2015, 25).

By listing pictures, words, design, and peritext she gives a better idea of what is part of the two dominating modes, the visual and the verbal mode. The latter two aspects might not always be considered at first but can also contain information and help decode the narratives. She further brings attention to the possible ways the different modes can interact. Their meanings can be complementary but also contradictory, which adds a lot of complexity.

In regard to the differentiation of modes, Hassett and Scott Curwood (2009) go even further. They include, “traditional design elements, such as color, line, shape, or texture” because “each design element expresses a level of meaning and a resource for interpretation” (272). Therefore, when a picturebook is read, all these different modes contribute to the process of meaning making and this is why these elements will also be part of the analysis of the picturebook discussed in chapter 4. Hassett and Scott Curwood conclude that “[e]ach element of a picture book, then, is a mode of sorts, because all of these features are socially and culturally shaped resources that signify something” (ibid). What they signify has to be decoded by the reader and can only be decoded if the reader has acquired knowledge about the social and cultural context and conventions, as has already been mentioned before.

1.4.3 Genres, Topics, and Themes

Browsing through the range of picturebooks present on the market, it becomes clear that there are all kinds of genres and topics to be found. Fuchs (2017) notes that one sample picturebook can even combine different genres, which is not surprising as “[b]y definition, they cross the borders between different forms of art, because literature and visual arts are always interrelated” (31).

As established before, picturebooks do not necessarily have to be fictional, which makes the selection even broader. There are several nonfiction picturebooks that deal with science, history, geography, animals, inventions, and famous or inspiring people, such as *A Time to Act: John F. Kennedy's Big Speech* by author Shana Corey and illustrator R. Gregory Christie (2017)

However, Bishop and Hickman (1992) argue, “[e]ven though the scope of picture books is wide and becoming wider, many of the picture books best remembered by older students and adults are fictional” (4). This is why the following discussion will be focused on fictional picturebooks.

In regard to genres, picturebooks can be adventure stories, realistic fiction, language plays, or fantasy (cf. Staiger 2014, 12). Moreover, there are many fairytale stories which are turned into picturebooks, such as the Caldecott Honor Book Rapunzel by Paul O. Zelinsky (1997). Legends and myths also encourage creative adaptations, such as the French retelling of Ondine by Benjamin Lacombe (2012).

Besides, picturebook texts do not necessarily have to be narrative. There are a variety of examples that turn poems into picturebooks (cf. Bishop and Hickman 1992, 4). Walter Dean Myers and his illustrator son Christopher Myers, for example, managed that very successfully in their Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Books picturebook Jazz (2006).

Pernille Ripp suggests diverse picturebooks on her website, sorted according to themes, topics, or special purposes. Among others, she lists the following themes: identity and character, courage, friendship and loneliness, social justice, empathy, imagination, and special days, such as the first day of school and Martin Luther King Day (Ripp 2018). Considering the phases of personality development adolescents go through, it is not surprising that themes such as identity, self, character, courage, or otherness are featured in picturebooks. After all, they play an important role in their personal as well as academic lives. Family and friendship are other essential themes that are of great value to students.

It is necessary to clarify that modern picturebooks often address sensitive issues deliberately. Costello and Kolodziej (2006) state, “contemporary picture books explore issues such as homelessness, war, drugs, death, violence, racism, and divorce” (27). Some students might be personally affected by these issues. Hence, picturebooks can be a non-threatening option for

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approaching these topics. In addition, if picturebook characters are well-written, their behavior can model possible ways of how to react to and process challenges (cf. Miller 1998, 380-381). One example of a picturebook that deals with death and the loss of a loved one would be *The Heart and the Bottle* by Oliver Jeffers (2010).

Another topic highlighted by Miletta (1992) is the struggle of many young girls in fourth grade with self-esteem and books concentrating on self-confident female protagonists who can encourage them (cf. 556). Exemplary books for strengthening self-confidence in girls are *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert N. Munch (1980), *Princess Smartypants* by Babette Cole (1987) or *My Name is Not Isabella* written by Jennifer Fosberry and illustrated by Mike Litwin (2008). As self-confidence can be an issue for every child and adolescent, there are various picturebooks which emphasize courage and seizing opportunities, such as *The Lion Inside* (2015) and *The Koala Who Could* (2016) by author Rachel Bright and illustrator Jim Field. Da Rocha (2017) also mentions picturebooks which deal with uniqueness or challenges that characters have to overcome (cf. 174). One recent example for such a book would be *We're All Wonders* by R.J. Palacio (2017).

Regarding realistic fiction, it should be mentioned that there are a variety of picturebooks that give insight into important historic events, such as conflicts and wars, for example *Rose Blanche* by Roberto Innocenti (1985). This picturebook, however, is definitely more suitable for older readers, as it “vividly shows the horrors of the Holocaust through the eyes of a young school girl who is moved to try to alleviate the suffering of some Jewish children in a World War II concentration camp” (Bishop and Hickman 1992, 9).

This short overview of some of the possible genres, topics, and themes gives insight into the vast amount of different picturebooks to choose from for private but also school purposes and it also leads to the next chapter, the discussion of different types of picturebooks.
1.5 Types

Up until now, the majority of scholars and authors quoted in this thesis have referred to fictional storybooks when talking about picturebooks. Nonetheless, there are more types of this format, which are listed by Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) in their word/image table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>IMAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>narrative text</td>
<td>exhibit book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narrative text with occasional illustrations</td>
<td>(nonnarrative, nonsequential)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narrative text with at least one picture on every spread (not dependent on image)</td>
<td>wordless picturebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>symmetrical picturebook</td>
<td>exhibit book with words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(two mutually redundant narratives)</td>
<td>(sequential)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complementary picturebook</td>
<td>exhibit book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(words and pictures filling each other’s gaps)</td>
<td>(nonnarrative, nonsequential)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“expanding” or “enhancing” picturebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(visual narrative supports verbal narrative, verbal narrative depends on visual narrative)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“counterpointing” picturebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(two mutually dependent narratives)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“sylleptic” picturebook (with or without words) (two or more narratives independent of each other)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>picture narrative with words (sequential)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>picture narrative without words (sequential)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wordless picturebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their attempt to create a picturebook typology, Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) focus on the relationship between words and images. This is why they also mention texts without pictures as one extreme and wordless picturebooks as the opposite extreme. Moreover, they differentiate between narrative texts that tell a story and nonnarrative texts, which could include nonfictional texts as well as poems (cf. 8).

Additionally, Nikolajeva and Scott distinguish between the ways stories are told in the picturebook. The storytelling through text and pictures could either be symmetrical, which means pictures and images have the same narrative, or the pictures could add information, making the relationship complementary (cf. ibid, 11-16). Even more importance is granted to the pictures if they serve to expand or enhance the storytelling (cf. ibid, 17). Furthermore, there are books in which the relation of text and pictures is not as harmonic as with symmetric
storytelling. Text and pictures may be counterpoints\(^2\) and contradict each other on different levels, which means in regard to “address”, “style”, “genre or modality”, “by juxtaposition”, “perspective”, “characterization”, “metafictive nature” and “space and time” (Nikolajeva and Scott 2006, 24-25). In contrast to the symmetrical and complementary types of picturebooks which do not provoke a lot of engagement, the latter types challenge readers because they are open to multiple interpretations (cf. ibid, 17).

For the purpose of this thesis and to underline the potential of picturebooks for the secondary EFL classroom, it is interesting to have a quick look at wordless picturebooks and postmodern picturebooks. While my main focus is on picturebooks that contain narrative material in text as well as illustrations, it is still important to draw attention to wordless picturebooks, especially as they have an astonishing potential for educational purposes. This is why a short paragraph dealing with this type of picturebook shall be included and serve as encouragement for teachers and researchers.

According to Arizpe (2013), wordless picturebooks are in fact, “[a] growing field for research” (163). Arizpe presents the development of research regarding wordless picturebooks and notices that “[f]rom an educational perspective, wordless picturebooks are considered an ideal medium for investigating language development, storytelling and other skills” (ibid, 164). She also mentions that wordless picturebooks are winning awards and gaining popularity worldwide as they seem to appeal to a wide audience of all age groups (cf. ibid).

Other aspects that make wordless picturebooks so fascinating are the challenges that come with the format, as recognized by Nikolajeva and Scott (2006), Arizpe (2013) and Burwitz-Melzer (2014). All these experts address the challenge of “filling in iconotextual gaps that are larger than those usually found in picturebooks with words” (Arizpe 2013, 165). The issue of decoding texts and pictures has already been elaborated on. If there are no words at all, the area of interpretation is even wider. Burwitz-Melzer (2014) explains, “[i]f the author does not provide words, the reader will have to do so, and this is often very difficult” (62). Such an understanding unmistakably disproves the notion that wordless picturebooks are too simple and not beneficial for older readers. A number of studies, articles, and examples show the potential wordless picturebooks have especially in regard to engaging reluctant readers of L1 (cf. Miletta 1992, Cassady 1998, Murphy 2009) and surely struggling or challenged language learners as well. The growing academic awareness of the potential of wordless picturebooks is reviewed

\(^2\) For a detailed discussion of the different kinds of counterpoint, see Nikolajeva and Scott (2006, 24-26).
in Arizpe’s (2013) article called “Meaning-making from wordless (or nearly wordless) picturebooks: what educational research expects and what readers have to say”.

The second group which should be included in this subchapter are postmodern picturebooks. Pantaleo (2014) deals with “the metafictive nature of postmodern picturebooks” (324) and argues that postmodern picturebooks are particularly suitable to help with understanding how complex and multilayered storytelling works. She focuses on postmodern picturebooks as they seem to be a reflection of our diverse world filled with multimodal and fragmented content (cf. ibid, 325). She also refers to postmodern characteristics and presents a list of metafictive devices which could be used in picturebooks, such as a direct address of the reader or a character by the narrator, or new stories which are told within existing stories (cf. ibid, 326). Evans (2013) further speaks of “multiple reading pathways” and establishes that postmodern picturebooks “are challenging to read because of their non linear texts and their lack of a straightforward text topology” (241). She also mentions that there are “numerous perspectives in terms of voice, illustrations and content” (ibid, 241).

Pantaleo’s (2014) research suggests that students benefit from working with postmodern picturebooks and their metafictive nature in terms of being able to infer, interpret, create hypotheses, find intertextual relations, and think critically (cf. 330): goals that should be aimed for in every successful lesson. Additionally, she mentions that they “can develop visual literacy competence, facilitate higher level thinking skills, and enhance literary and literacy understandings” (ibid, 331). Pantaleo observed engagement and active participation as well as joy when students discussed metafictive elements in picturebooks. An increase of engagement and an involved reader seem to be a prerequisite for reading metafictive picturebooks (cf. ibid, 330). Judging from these arguments, postmodern picturebooks are another group of potentially useful materials for the classroom.

1.6 Critical Voices

Although leading scholars have underlined the significance and value of picturebooks for teaching and learning, the critical voices have not yet disappeared. The majority of critics concentrate on the following two aspects, which will be addressed throughout the thesis: 1) picturebooks are not literature and 2) picturebooks are merely for children.

First, picturebooks are traditionally part of children’s and young adult literature, but they are also literature in their own right. They can be very complex, with poetic and sophisticated
language and challenging, due to the varying relationship and interdependence between the pictures and the text. Comics face similar critique, although with that format, it is less about their classification as literature rather than art. McCloud (1994) observes, “[w]ords and pictures together are considered, at best, a diversion for the masses, at worst a product of crass commercialism” (140). Nevertheless, McCloud highlights on various occasions that comics are to be considered art (cf. ibid, 163). Picturebooks are both literature and art.

Second, picturebooks are still sometimes criticized for being too short, too simple and therefore for very young children. The following quote sums up why the brevity of the texts in picturebooks does not mean that they are automatically simpler and easier to understand.

“The shorter text does not indicate easier material; the readability of picture books often exceeds the age level for which they are intended due to their complexity of vocabulary and density of information” (Costello and Kolodziej 2006, 28).

Hence, even if the picturebook seems to be simple at first sight it might be more challenging than expected. There might be quite advanced vocabulary as well as dense information and a complex story.

Newkirk (1992) shares experiences from his personal life and how he observed his daughter abandon picturebooks as soon as she became a fluent reader in second grade. He goes on to list the reasons why he thinks picturebooks are generally not read or reluctantly read by older readers (cf. 11). These reasons are related to three biases, concerning length, print, and reading for pleasure.

The first bias can be described as “the Western bias in favor of elaboration and explicitness, a bias that contrasts dramatically with the emphasis on suggestion and economy in Asian writing (and art)” (ibid). Consequently, our texts tend to be detailed and longer. In Asian writing this preference does not exist. An exemplary literary format that comes to mind immediately to support this notion is the Haiku. According to Newkirk, the misjudgment of shorter text forms is even mirrored in the way they are named, such as “short story” (ibid, 12) for example (cf. ibid).

The second bias leads to a preference of print, which means written texts/words in contrast to visuals, such as illustrations and pictures (cf. ibid). The fact that young readers move on from picturebooks to novels, or other books with less or no pictures promotes this claim.

The third bias, which also influences the second one, is a bias against pleasure. As Newkirk puts it, “[p]leasure, after all, has been suspect since the Puritan times” (ibid). However, one of the main benefits of picturebooks is that narration and information as well as enjoyment during the reading process are intertwined. Newkirk goes on to impressively deconstruct the arguments

Evans (2013) concludes her examination of picturebooks, comics, graphic novels, and fusion texts with the demand that visual literature deserves enhanced respect. Her optimistic prediction is:

“If accomplished author/illustrators continue to produce quality visual texts […], then it will not be long before comics, graphic novels and picturebooks will, along with the rapidly developing and closely related, fusion texts, be seen as respectable genres, read, enjoyed and talked about by many” (Evans 2013, 247).

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the increasing acknowledgment of these literary formats in not only the private but also the academic and especially pedagogic field.
2 English Language Learning and Literature Learning

The main topic of this thesis is the potential of picturebooks in the upper secondary EFL classroom. Before this potential can be fully examined, there is the need for a theoretical basis to ground practical suggestions and conclusions. In this chapter, there will be a discussion of theories and findings which, if combined, create the most effective teaching environment for working with picturebooks.

First, I will refer to Claire Kramsch (2006) and her call for progression from communicative to symbolic competence. Second, a short definition of literacy will be given. This is followed by an examination of how the concept of multiple literacies led to a new concept of Multiliteracies as suggested by Cope and Kalantzis (2015). Third, language creativity and the power of playing with words in order to foster language learning will be examined more closely. Finally, the concept of aesthetic reading will be included, as it is equally important in regard to teaching with picturebooks.

2.1 From Communicative to Symbolic Competence

According to Ur (2012), the communicative approach in language teaching “is based on the assumption that language is (for) communication and that we learn it best through naturalistic acquisition processes (i.e. processes similar to those used when learning a native language). The classroom is more learner-centred, and the conveying of meanings is seen as more important than accuracy” (Ur 2012, 8).

Favoring a classroom that is focused on the learners and conveying meanings is a good basis to create a nourishing learning environment. However, there are learners who might benefit from a more post-communicative approach which also offers some instances of “explicit teaching of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling, including form-focused (but usually meaningful) exercises” (Ur 2012, 8-9). Both the communicative and post-communicative approach can be the basis for activities that are not only communicative but creative, collaborative, and that allow room for language play, which will be the topic of chapter 2.3. Yet, as suggested by Kramsch (2006), communicative competence should be further developed and shifted into a symbolic competence, which will be explained in the next paragraph.

Kramsch (2006) sums up the developments in foreign language learning and teaching research and comes to the conclusion that even though the communicative language teaching approach was revolutionary, there have been changes in education and society that call for a
new perspective (cf. 249-250). She claims, “communication has been slowly resignified to mean the ability to exchange information speedily and effectively and to solve problems, complete assigned tasks, and produce measurable results” (Kramsch 2006, 250). These objectives are firmly criticized by Kramsch as they have shifted the initial intentions of early scholars who developed the communicative approach and do no longer meet the requirements of a global society (cf. ibid). This is what led Kramsch to illustrate a new competence that can serve the demands of a complex, modern, and multicultural world far better, namely symbolic competence. Kramsch is convinced that “rather than communicative strategies, [...] people might need much more subtle semiotic practices that draw on a multiplicity of perceptual clues to make and convey meaning” (ibid). The modern world is full of such clues. Therefore, we need the skills and abilities to decode and use them.

Based on her observations and theories Kramsch draws conclusions for language teaching. Even though she refers to “the collegiate level” (Kramsch 2006, 251), her findings are also true for language learning in general and at a secondary level, which is the focus of this thesis. Kramsch asserts that students need to develop their symbolic competence in a broad, sophisticated, complex, and multimodal manner (cf. ibid). In regard to multimodality she mentions “spoken, written, visual, electronic” (ibid) modes, which will be of particular interest in relation to the use of picturebooks in the secondary EFL classroom later explored. According to the scholar, it is insufficient for language learners to simply exchange information without considering the multifaceted symbolic and semiotic system of the target language and its native speakers (cf. ibid, 251). Furthermore, she adds a crucial point by stating, “[I]anguage learners are not just communicators and problem solvers, but whole persons with hearts, bodies, and minds, with memories, fantasies, loyalties, identities” (ibid). Each and every language learner has his or her own experiences and characteristics that influence their learning and their interaction with the language and its speakers. They will react and respond in verbal interactions as complex individuals. Consequently, they need to have not only communicative but rather symbolic competence. As Kramsch puts it, symbolic competence adds another aspect to the simple ability of having a conversation in a foreign language and negotiating meanings, which would be “the ability to produce and exchange symbolic goods in the complex global context in which we live today” (ibid). This should be what language teachers and language learners strive for.
In order to foster symbolic competence, Kramsch (2006) stresses the value of literary texts. Her reasoning is that through literature, students “can learn the full meaning making potential of language” (251). Moreover, it is through literary texts that three aspects of symbolic competence can be promoted: “the production of complexity, the tolerance of ambiguity, and an appreciation of form as meaning” (ibid). This ties in well with the arguments presented in chapter 3, which illustrate the potential of picturebooks as representatives of literature in the EFL secondary classroom. Picturebook texts can be challenging, especially for foreign language learners, and they can model how to produce complex language. Moreover, they present ambiguity due to interdependencies of texts and images as well as content or characters. Additionally, the work with picturebooks can definitely promote the third aspect, which suggests that their form has meaning and is appreciated as such.

One of the most prominent features of picturebooks is their multimodality. Because of this feature they can be used to develop not only literary literacy, but multiple literacies, as will be illustrated in the next subchapter.

2.2 From Multiple Literacies to Multiliteracies

The concept of literacy has been discussed broadly. The vast amount of studies and articles covering this topic prove that. It is not the aim of this subchapter to examine the extensive discussion of the multiple literacies but to include sufficient information and theoretical findings to establish a basis for the further argumentation in this thesis. Therefore, the focus will be on an introductory definition of the term literacy and an investigation of a concept called “Multiliteracies” which is presented by Cope and Kalantzis (2015).

Starting with a definition of the term, the scholars explain that ‘literacy’, “means some quite definite things to be acquired: to read the ordinary texts of modern society—newspapers, information books, novels; to be able to write using correct spelling and grammar; and to appreciate high-cultural values through exposure to a taste of the literary canon” (Cope and Kalantzis 2015, 1).

Ellis (2016) lists the following different multiple literacies: “visual, emotional, cultural, nature, digital, moving image literacy and ‘learning’ literacy, which is linked to learning how to learn and learner autonomy” (27). She argues that the term ‘multiple literacies’ goes far beyond the mere capability to consume and produce text (cf. ibid, 28). Ellis’ arguments correspond with what Cope and Kalantzis (2015) describe as the developments that led to them finding a new terminology and theoretical construct, called ‘Multiliteracies’, which will be discussed later on.
Ellis (cf. 2016, 28) as well as Delanoy (cf. 2017, 13) note that in our time and society, the making of meaning is multimodal. This observation instantaneously calls to mind the previously discussed multimodality of picturebooks and their suggested potential to foster multiple literacies.

Ellis proceeds to say that, “[m]ultiple literacies encompass any forms of literacy that require learning how to interpret and decode information conveyed through multiple modes” (2016, 28). Some of these modes are visual (with a specific visual narrative), emotional (with reference to characters and their facial expressions and body language) cultural, natural, or digital (cf. ibid). Delanoy (2017) also draws attention to the “need for a pedagogy that gives insight into different literacies and how they are combined to create meaning” (14). Subsequently, Ellis highlights how picturebooks can help with developing or strengthening exactly those skills by offering multimodality and opportunities for multiple language learning activities (cf. 2016, 29).

The basic understanding of literacy, as quoted at the beginning of this subchapter, was challenged with the development of the internet, mass media, and new forms of texts in the 1990s. As a result, the New London Group met to discuss “the current state and possible future of literacy pedagogy” (Cope and Kalantzis 2015, 2). In this context, the group further developed the concept of ‘Multiliteracies’ (cf. ibid, 1-2). Two of their main arguments revolve around the facts that meaning making nowadays involves various contexts and modalities. First, communication and meaning making are influenced by “culture, gender, life experience, subject matter, social or subject domain, and the like” (ibid, 3). Hence, learners have to be able to differentiate, understand, and apply the various meanings and contexts. Second, the practices of meaning making are often multimodal, “in which written-linguistic modes of meaning interface with oral, visual, audio, gestural, tactile, and spatial patterns of meaning” (ibid). This not only translates into including visual formats, such as authentic picturebooks, but also digital texts, digital picturebooks, read alouds and films, for example on YouTube, into the classroom context.

Fuchs (2017) refers to the same context when she uses the term “Multimodal literacy” (28). In her argument, she refers back to the process of reading a book which differs for children and for adults. She argues:

“Both children and adults experience different modes when reading a book. They identify verbal and visual storytelling strategies used by authors and illustrators. ‘Multimodal literacy’ encapsulates the skills to understand these narrative strategies in a text and a picture, which are often supported by music in films and in computer games” (Fuchs 2017, 28).
Cope and Kalantzis (2015, 4-5) move on to explain the main dimensions of their literacy pedagogy. When they first established their ideas, they called those practices: “situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice” (ibid, 4). After some time, however, they adapted the four practices into: “‘Knowledge Processes’: experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying” (ibid). The first process of learning relates to learners connecting new experiences in school with their personal interest and real-world. It is also emphasized that learners experience new as well as already known texts. The second stage concerns learners being able to conceptualize, to differentiate between concepts and theories and to understand elements of language, as well as to develop a metalanguage to name them. The third practice includes “analyzing text functions and critically interrogating the interests of participants in the communication process” (ibid). Therefore, learners should be able to analyze functionally and critically. Finally, the fourth process refers to the reflection and appropriate as well as creative application of what is learnt to real-life contexts, i.e. putting acquired knowledge into practice, creating proper texts, collaborating, and as a result, communicating with interaction partners (cf. ibid, 4-5).

Cope and Kalantzis (2015) point out that their Multiliteracies pedagogy is “‘reflexive’—neither didactic nor authentic, but both” (6). As such, their pedagogy combines the best parts of two opposing poles in pedagogy discussion and practice (cf. ibid, 6 and 15-16).

Moreover, they describe what their pedagogy of Multiliteracies and ‘Learning by Design’ means for teachers as well as students. “Teachers become designers as they select the range of activities they will bring to the learning environment, plan their sequence, and reflect on learning outcomes during and after the learning” (ibid, 31). Not only designing in terms of planning a lesson is highlighted in this statement, but also the reflective process during and after teaching, which is a very important aspect of professional development and successful teaching. In addition, “learners, when the Knowledge Processes are explicitly named, […] develop conscious awareness of the different kinds of things they can do to know. Increasingly, they become designers of their own knowledge and take greater control over their learning” (ibid). Hence, students become more autonomous, independent and self-regulated, results that are definitely desirable and beneficial for their future lives.

To conclude, learning is more successful when the best features of didactic and authentic pedagogies are combined and when the principles of the pedagogy of Multiliteracies are applied
(cf. Cope and Kalantzis 2015, 31). Additionally, by working with picturebooks and designing appropriate activities, teachers can integrate the findings of Cope and Kalantzis to the benefit of their students in our modern, globalized, connected, and complex world.

Their findings can be developed even further, if they are applied to interactive picturebooks, which influence literacy learning as well, as we are reminded by Hassett and Curwood (2009, 270).

2.3 From Language Learning to Creativity in Language Learning

Maley and Bolitho (2015) point out that even though the term ‘creativity’ is widely used in the ELT context, it is not easy to find one perfect definition. In their article, they reflect on different aspects that are part of creativity, such as the ability to create something new and significant in thoughts and material. This aspect can also be applied to the language classroom (cf. 434).

It is Maley and Bolitho’s claim that in order to enable creativity in language learning, students need time and the possibility to play and take risks with language without having to be afraid of making mistakes. In addition, students should be encouraged to be attentive and make new connections between learnt content and new aspects of the language. Collaborative language learning is the beneficial factor mentioned last but not least (cf. 2015, 435).

If students refuse to do creative tasks because they believe themselves to not be creative, they need comfort and assistance. At some point, they might be able to enhance their creativity, because as Maley and Bolitho argue, “everyone is capable of [creativity] given the right conditions, especially in language” (ibid). Students need to be encouraged to be playful, to take risks, and to explore those new possibilities in the language they are learning.

All of this should be incorporated in the EFL classroom, although, as Maley and Bolitho (2015) warn, creativity is seldom promoted by officials within the educational system, where the focus is on standardization. Yet, the authors call on teachers to take on that challenge (cf. 435). Tin (2013) agrees and argues, “[t]here should be room for communication as well as creativity in ELT classrooms, and it is indeed possible that creative tasks and communicative tasks can complement each other” (396). This is very important. One aspect does not prevent the other.

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3 More on the topic can be found in Dimensions of Creativity edited by Margaret A. Boden (1994).
Language creativity and language play can support language learning because “[t]he need to use language to construct new meaning facilitates language learning by helping to stretch and destabilize learners’ language” (Tin 2013, 387). Learners experiment with language and develop it throughout their practice. In order to “say something new” (ibid), they have to strive for vocabulary expansion, new word combinations and more complex grammatical structures, which are also more likely to be remembered (cf. ibid).

Another author who argues in favor of creativity in a language learning context is Cook (2000). He particularly concentrates on language play in language learning and language education. His deliberations start with an analysis of three different levels: the “forms of language play: rhythm and repetition in children’s’ verse” (Cook 2000, 11), “the meanings of language play: imaginary worlds” (ibid, 35) and the “uses of language play: competition and collaboration” (ibid, 61). All three levels influence each other, and Cook’s conclusions demonstrate how present and vital language play can be in an average human life, starting in early childhood and leading up to not only adulthood but also old age (cf. ibid, 11-34).

In regard to the first level, Cook uses examples of children’s verse and games to examine our fascination with repetition as well as memorable patterns in rhythm and rhyme (cf. ibid, 5). Considering poems and picturebooks, this aspect seems to be highly relevant. Cook does acknowledge that linguistic patterns, such as rhythm and rhyme, “have a clear potential to aid language acquisition” (ibid, 30). However, he is not content with restricting their influence to the period of childhood as he sees them as equally important for adults (cf. ibid).

Cook further highlights the connection between the first level of playfully dealing with particular language forms and the second one in which children, as well as adults, create imaginative worlds (cf. ibid, 31). He argues that “[a]dults and children alike devote a large amount of time and thought to imaginary characters, situations, and events” (ibid, 35). We enjoy fictional stories presented to us in all kinds of different forms and through different channels, and the play with language in this context is considered to be pleasurable (cf. ibid, 35-36). Such activity also adds “to creative and hypothetical thought” (ibid, 5). The creation of imaginary worlds, the involvement in stories and characters’ lives and the development of creativity and critical thinking is also fostered by reading picturebooks.

Cook’s (2000) general conception is that approaches in language teaching tend to disregard language play (cf. 178). Yet he is convinced that the importance of play from early childhood up to old age should result in the opportunities to include playful language activities or language
play in the classroom (cf. Cook 2000, 5). He further lists detailed advantages which would result from the inclusion of playful elements in the language learning environment (cf. ibid, 194-201). We are reminded by Cook that work and play do not have to be polar opposites. In contrast, the latter might benefit the first immensely (cf. ibid, 202-204). Of course, integrating play in a language learning classroom is not only putting language into use but most importantly it is engaging, memorable, motivating, and fun.

Cook’s position is supported by Hall (2015). In his analysis of theories and approaches concerned with literature in language education, Hall (2015) regards creativity in language learning and teaching as an important dimension because it plays a central role in our daily lives (cf. 10). Contrary to the common language teaching practice with the goal of communication and a “straightforward exchange of information” (ibid, 37), authors such as Cook and Hall are convinced that language is frequently used in a playful manner and language teaching should be in line with this (cf. Hall 2015, 37).

In regard to the benefits of literature, Hall (2015) argues that through literary texts, “language learners can explore who they are and who they are not, and who they might be becoming as they participate in this new language” (148). This can be connected to the description of different topics and themes incorporated in contemporary picturebooks and their value for L1 as well as foreign language learners. Literary texts offer such a wide range of opportunities, e.g. to participate in language, to develop and train empathy, to enjoy imagination, to dive into another world, and to be involved with the characters and stories of this world, aspects which will be discussed in the next subchapter.

2.4 From Reading for Information to Aesthetic Reading

Creativity is also relevant in the reading process (cf. Rosenblatt 1978, 51), especially if readers do not merely read for information but are involved in an aesthetic reading experience.

“Aesthetic Reading” is introduced by Rosenblatt (1978) in contrast to “nonaesthetic reading” (23). For Rosenblatt, the latter kind is marked by the reader’s intention to extract specific information. She calls this type of reading “efferent” (ibid, 24). With efferent reading, the reading experience as such is of lesser importance than the information which is filtered out of a text and remains in the reader’s mind long after the reading is done (cf. ibid, 23-24). Consequently, the biggest difference between nonaesthetic and aesthetic reading is the reader’s focus. Rosenblatt clarifies, “‘[i]n aesthetic reading […] the reader’s primary concern is with
what happens during the actual reading event” (Rosenblatt 1978, 24) and “the reader’s attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text” (ibid, 25). What a reader is experiencing during the reading of a text could be an accumulation of “associations, feelings, attitudes, and ideas” (ibid, 25). These effects can be particularly strong with narrative texts, such as picturebooks. One very interesting claim by Rosenblatt is that the two kinds of reading can be applied to any text. If the reader wants, he or she can read a text efferently or aesthetically (cf. ibid). This means that the reader can choose how to read the text, either by just looking for information or by engaging in aesthetic readings.

In the light of Rosenblatt’s, Benton and Fox’s (1985), and Nissen’s (1982 and 1984) findings, Delanoy (2002) developed his hermeneutic and reader-response related model for aesthetic reading of narrative texts (cf. 66-67).

Delanoy (2002) understands aesthetic experience as a process and, inspired by Rosenblatt, differentiates between “evocation” and “interpretation” (67). For Rosenblatt (1978), evocation is “the lived-through process of building up the work under the guidance of the text” (69). By work she means a reader’s reactions to the text (cf. Delanoy 2002, 68). Evocation happens during the process of reading and interpretation stands for reflection on the text, which is likely to occur afterwards (cf. ibid, 67).

With successful evocation in mind, Delanoy (2002) mentions two types of readers who are likely to struggle with the whole process due to their problems with understanding the text and their lack of language skills, particularly in a foreign language. As these readers tend to be less motivated, it is essential to come up with ideas of how to help them to be able to experience evocation as fully as possible (cf. 70). In fact, the use of picturebooks might be particularly effective with these readers as the books offer textual as well as visual narratives. Readers who struggle with understanding a text and readers with limiting language skills could be able to use the images in order to decode the meaning of the unknown text and thus, experience evocation to a greater extent than with other formats without visuals.

When Delanoy (2002), following Benton and Fox (1985), describes the four phases of the evocation process, he always adds suggestions for struggling readers (cf. 71). In order to ensure successful evocation in a classroom setting, it is advisable to take those recommendations into consideration and integrate them into the lesson plan.
The first phase described by Delanoy (2002) is “Feeling like reading” (71). He points out that in this phase, it is important to prepare readers for what is to be expected and to minimize possible obstacles (language-wise or culture-wise) that hinder understanding and evocation. It could be helpful to invite them to activate previous knowledge. Furthermore, they should be motivated and their curiosity about the text should be raised (cf. ibid). As far as picturebooks are concerned, again, exemplary images might be useful to help overcome difficulties, activate previous knowledge, and increase learner motivation.

The second phase is called “Getting into the text” (Delanoy 2002, 71). Delanoy states that this is the crucial moment when readers are supposed to step into another world, the world of the text (ibid). This world can also be called “secondary world”, a term suggested by Benton (1992) and borrowed by Delanoy (1996, 65). Delanoy (1996) explains that “readers become so engrossed in a fictional world that they can temporarily shut out their primary worlds” (65). In this process, primary world rules and obligations can be suspended, at least for as long as readers stay in the secondary world. Subsequently, readers can test ideas and explore language without having to fear restrictions and sanctions (cf. Delanoy 2002, 72-73). What happens in the secondary world can invite reflection upon primary worlds and permit extension of the readers’ cognitive and affective capabilities (cf. Delanoy 1996, 65; Delanoy 2018, 142). Nonetheless, it may take time before readers are able to enter the secondary world and this step is not possible at all if readers cannot understand the text (cf. Delanoy 2002, 71-72). Again, through use of pictures, picturebooks offer a secondary world which might be easier to access. For longer texts, Delanoy suggests possible strategies in order to help students enter a secondary world, remain in it or facilitate re-entry effortlessly (cf. ibid, 72).

“Lost in the text” (Delanoy 2002, 72) is the third phase. If this phase is entered successfully, readers become fully involved in the text. In other words, they are open to new experiences as well as knowledge and they are emotionally involved. In addition, readers reflect on their experience and might even distance themselves from the primary world (cf. ibid, 72-74; Delanoy 2018, 143).

The final phase would be “Getting out of the text” (Delanoy 2002, 74). Readers end the reading process, leave the secondary world, return to their own world (either immediately after they stop reading or after some time has passed), and reflect on the results of their experience
and their reactions to the text. This final phase is supposed to lead to phases of interpretation (cf. Delanoy 2002, 74-75).

For Delanoy (2002), part of the interpretation stage, which can be initiated in parallel with or after the reading process, would be talking about the text and the experiences made. It also offers opportunities for teachers to facilitate their learners’ understanding of the text and help them get something out of it despite possible struggles that might have been observed (cf. 75).

Delanoy utilizes Nissen’s (1982 and 1984) model of four interpretation phases. The first stage is characterized by the collection of ideas and first reactions to the text. These responses are further developed in the next phase of modification. Modification means that understandings may be corrected or approved and additional explanations as well as knowledge may be provided by fellow students or the teacher. Next would be nucleation. This third phase involves the filtering of substantial findings gained during the interpretation and discussions. The final phase is all about transferring and using what was learnt to future projects. The experiences made and the knowledge acquired should support students when they read the text for a second time, when they read other literary works, or when they work on other future tasks (cf. ibid, 75-76).
3 Learning through Picturebooks in the EFL Classroom

“[…] picturebooks can introduce a playful process involving imagination and experimentation in the EFL classroom” (Bland 2014b, 93).

This quote summarizes three major arguments in favor of incorporating picturebooks in the EFL classroom. They enable playfulness and foster imagination as well as experimentation. These two factors are essential for language learning and learning in general. Due to the vast number of visuals and overstimulation by new technologies and modern media, it could be argued that the imagination and creativity of children withers. This may be the case especially if children remain passive and merely absorb fast paced pictures without creating anything themselves or thinking critically. Working with picturebooks in the language classroom may be one way to combine children’s appreciation of images with useful content and strategies to nurture playfulness, imagination, creativity, and experimentation.

The number of articles and studies promoting the use of picturebooks in a language learning environment and offering suggestions on how to utilize picturebooks successfully is increasing. Many of the experiences, thoughts, and opinions cited refer to the L1 classroom. However, several ideas and findings from the L1 classroom can easily be adapted for the EFL classroom and, due to the advanced language level, the upper secondary classroom in particular. As an example, Danielson (1992) summarizes some of the reasons why picturebooks should be included in the language arts classroom. She argues that they “have been used to enhance fifth graders’ visual literacy and the critical thinking of junior high students. They give opportunities for integrating reading and writing and for developing even high school students’ vocabularies” (652). These benefits mentioned by Danielson, such as visual literacy, critical thinking, the integration of reading and writing, and vocabulary expansion, are desirable for any language learning context and will be further discussed in this chapter.

41 years ago, Watson (1978) already proclaimed the potential of picturebooks in an educational context and especially with young adolescents. He recognized picturebooks as being “enticing and thought-provoking materials” which can also “add a little more spark and vitality” (208) to lessons (cf. ibid). Supported by the findings of other scholars, Watson claims that the benefits of picturebooks are related to the potential of visual signs assisting readers to comprehend verbal signs (cf. ibid, 209). Even when text and pictures are not corresponding, the visual element remains and can be interpreted either in relation to the text or in its own right.
Watson (1978) goes on to recommend the use of picturebooks due to their brevity and the advantage of pictures evoking emotional reactions and creativity (cf. 210-211).

In accordance with Watson, scholars agree that main assets of picturebooks are their brevity, their short texts, and precise language. Because of the limited page numbers, picturebooks can easily be read and discussed with a class in one lesson (cf. Newkirk 1992, 19; Carlisle 1992, 52). However, the shortness does not necessarily mean that picturebooks are simple and straightforward. On the contrary, as Newkirk (1992) states, “[t]he economy of written language, the mix of picture and text, leaves much unsaid and open” (19). As a result, picturebooks present an excellent opportunity for interpretation, discussion, and language learning for that matter.

In regard to learning through picturebooks (and graphic novels), Burwitz-Melzer (2014, 63) presents the following five groups of competences that can be trained or supported:

1. “traditional language competences”
2. “literary and visual literacy”
3. “social and political learning”
4. “intercultural” competences
5. “enhancement of use of the new media”

The focus of this thesis is on language awareness and development, vocabulary expansion, creativity, language play, storytelling, literary and visual literacy. Therefore, the following pedagogical objectives will concentrate on these aspects, which would be part of the first two groups of competences mentioned by Burwitz-Melzer. Yet, of course, the other three groups of competences are very important as well.

The potential fostering of social and political learning as well as the training of cultural and intercultural competences through picturebooks is discussed in great detail by authors such as Bacharach and Miller (1996), Miller (1998), Nussbaum (1998), Ghosn (2002), Delanoy (2006), Nünning (2008), Bredella (2010), Burwitz-Melzer (2014), Pölzleitner and Schumm Fauster (2017), to only mention a few. However, this is such a widely and thoroughly discussed topic that it will not be a focus of this thesis. The question and discussion of how to use picturebooks in order to develop and foster intercultural competence offers more than enough material for various master’s theses. Since I highly acknowledge the importance of the intercultural potential of picturebooks and it always accompanies the work with authentic picturebooks, I will present a few fundamental aspects of that matter.
Bacharach and Miller (1996) analyze possible ways to integrate multicultural literature, especially African American fiction works, into the American Middle School Curriculum. They define two goals of integrating multicultural literature in the lessons for young adolescents. The first goal is, “for students to be able to develop positive, realistic images of their own gender or ethnic roles through the positive role models in literature” (Bacharach and Miller 1996, 37). The second aim is “for students to gain an understanding and empathy for those of a different gender, race, or culture” (ibid). Even though the authors relate mostly to African American students, their findings can be applied to any multicultural classroom. Both the benefits of relatable role models for self-identity and the opportunity to discover different perspectives are vital for every student. Through working with literature, students can gain valuable learning effects and personal growth. Furthermore, picturebooks that deal with a variety of controversial and difficult topics, as mentioned in chapter 1.4.3, are particularly suited for these purposes and learning objectives.

Ur (2012) mentions similar reasons why literature should be included in the language learning classroom to develop and train intercultural competence. She includes keywords such as “awareness”, “tolerance”, and “respect” (219) in her explanations related to the topic. Moreover, she agrees that teachers should use materials and tasks that open their students’ horizons to all kinds of cultural implications connected to their own and different or foreign cultures (cf. ibid). These are the arguments which were developed with intercultural learning in mind. Yet, they are true for whenever teachers work with literary formats such as picturebooks in their EFL classroom.

3.1 Pedagogical Objectives

If this subchapter had a subtitle, it would be a question asking why picturebooks should be used in the EFL classroom. The reasons are closely linked to all the advantages picturebooks can offer in a classroom setting. Hence, this subchapter deals with the specific objectives and purposes that can be served by the visual literary format. The areas of interest are language awareness and development, literary literacy, the advantages of authentic mentor texts, visual literacy, motivation, and empowerment.

3.1.1 Language Awareness and Development

The first objective examined in regard to the use of picturebooks in the upper secondary EFL classroom is language awareness and development. Basically, as Bishop and Hickman already argued in 1992, “picture books can help readers build greater awareness of language” (6). With
all the grammatical structures, the specific vocabulary, and precise word choice, picturebooks present excellent examples of language in use and can be analyzed not only in the L1 but especially the EFL classroom. Language awareness can be trained by using any picturebook. Nonetheless, there are books that focus on linguistic or grammatical features specifically. One example of a book that calls attention to punctuation is *Exclamation Mark* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal (2013).

It is important to note right away that picturebooks “teach by example” (Bishop and Hickman 1992, 6). Picturebooks as example texts, or mentor texts, is a theme that will reappear constantly throughout this thesis. This will further be examined in chapter 3.1.2.

Burwitz-Melzer (2014) points out that picturebooks can “help to develop most of the traditional language competences since they require discussion, ask for repeated and detailed reading and may also lead to creative or analytical written tasks […]” (63). Taking this into consideration, this subchapter is divided into the following areas of interest: vocabulary expansion, listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, and writing skills.

The division into the four skills was made in light of the general view in teaching that language skills can be grouped into “receptive skills”, including listening and reading, and “productive skills” (Scrivener 2011, 26), including speaking and writing. The decision to start with the examination of possible vocabulary expansion was made as picturebooks are authentic texts written with L1 readers in mind and as such can be assumed to display complex and new vocabulary for EFL learners. Scrivener (2011) mentions that the four language skills are regularly tightly connected (cf. ibid). Subsequently, they are understood to be closely intertwined even if they are subdivided in the following paragraphs.

**Vocabulary Expansion**

Before examining the potential of picturebooks in regard to vocabulary expansion, it should be mentioned that the term vocabulary is understood in a broader sense than just single words or short phrases (cf. Scrivener 2011, 185). Scrivener prefers to call it “*lexis* (rather than the more familiar *vocabulary*)” (ibid) to demonstrate this deeper understanding. After acknowledging Scrivener’s reasoning and adapting it to my understanding of the expression, I will use both terms.

This area of interest is chosen because, as argued by Ur (2012), “[t]he most important language-learning benefit of intensive study of a text is arguably vocabulary expansion or
review” (29). English picturebooks are usually written for L1 readers, which means that the language level is quite high and challenging for language learners. Contrary to prejudices against the medium, most picturebooks do not display simple lexis but “fairly advanced” (Miller 1998, 377) vocabulary. Furthermore, they usually deal with a specific topic and are therefore eminently suitable for activities leading to vocabulary expansion. Picturebooks such as *The Word Collector*, which focus on language and deal with the topic of vocabulary explicitly, are of course exemplary materials for this teaching objective.

A useful strategy suggested by Ur (2012) is that “[b]y drawing attention to them and doing vocabulary-focused activities, you can help students to notice and learn new items, and review ones they have met before […]” (29-30). Due to the picturebook format and the addition of the visual element, students can be encouraged to investigate new lexis in a motivating and exciting way. Teachers can draw attention to new lexis and present engaging ways to work with it.

EFL students’ motivation can be enhanced as they are older and have more experience than younger readers in dealing with texts, including picturebooks. Bland (2014b) puts it like this: “[d]ue to their more developed cognitive skills, L2 students can gain confidence in being perceptive and confident ‘gap’ readers despite their limited English” (85). Hence, despite the fact that they might not know specific words yet, they are more than capable of filling in the blanks. This is especially true for upper secondary students. Filling in the blanks successfully leads to deeper text-examination, understanding, and ideally a boost of confidence.

Miller (1998) presents a possible strategy aiming to help students with new vocabulary in the L1 middle school classroom, which can also be transferred to the EFL classroom. He advises that “[w]hile reading the book aloud to the class, the teacher can model good strategies for figuring out difficult words and lead the class in further guided practice of these strategies” (Miller 1998, 379). As an example, Miller suggests using an alphabet picturebook, such as *Animalia* by Graeme Base, which presents alliterative phrases and corresponding pictures (cf. ibid). Although books like these have a certain appeal for vocabulary learning, it does not have to be a specific alphabet book to discuss vocabulary in the EFL classroom. Sophisticated picturebooks already demonstrate rich vocabulary which can be addressed and connected to activities.

Finally, I want to include a useful principle of vocabulary teaching suggested by Ur (2012) which should be followed when teaching vocabulary with picturebooks. Ur strongly advises
linking new words to teachers’ and students’ personal lives and emotions (cf. Ur 2012, 68). If a picturebook is chosen due to a particular topic or theme that is important to students, this principle should be easy to follow and consequently new vocabulary should be remembered as well.

**Listening Skills**

The possibilities of training listening skills through the use of picturebooks is connected to teachers reading them aloud to their class. A variety of articles are focused on the positive effects reading a book out loud can have on students of all ages.

Giorgis (1999) emphasizes the impact reading a book to the whole class can have on older students in particular. She notes that most students in secondary schools have not been in contact with picturebooks for a long time. However, most of them enjoy being read to no less than younger students, even if they might be irritated at the beginning (cf. 51). Rief (1992) agrees with Giorgis on adolescents being willing to listen and even enjoying the process (cf. 72). Giorgis (1999) claims that “[h]earing a good story read aloud often piques the interest of the most reluctant reader, who will then become an active listener and, possibly, a more willing reader” (53). As I have witnessed in person, a picturebook reading can instantly raise the interest even of a diverse group of college students of different subject areas. Therefore, if it is an interesting story and presented in an enthusiastic and engaging way, it can be a great input for adolescent students as well. If the teacher manages to raise their interest and this leads to an increased reading motivation, it is all the more reason to promote regular sessions where it is included.

Rief (1992) argues that due to their brevity, picturebooks can easily be integrated in lessons at any time (cf. 72). It is really the decision of the teacher and his/her objectives when and how to include a picturebook. Most important is that picturebooks “are meant to be seen and heard” (ibid, 71). Da Rocha (2017) adds a convincing argument to promote reading literary texts such as picturebooks with a class when she claims that “[f]ocused reading in a whole-class setting allows teachers to equip learners with reading strategies and tools for text analysis” (171). I have experienced how a teacher can demonstrate reading successfully. Part of it is showing students how to pronounce words, but also how to work with prosody, and especially how to create suspense. Furthermore, the teacher can model reading behavior and reading strategies, such as which questions to ask, how to predict events, or how to infer meaning. Because of this, reading aloud does not only train listening but also reading skills.
In order to examine the potential of teachers’ read-alouds in middle schools, Albright and Ariail (2005) conducted a survey in Texan middle schools. They questioned American teachers across the disciplines about their opinion on and their experiences with reading aloud. The survey shows that language arts teachers read aloud regularly. However, the researchers found out that most teachers in the content areas read textbooks passages aloud. Only a few of the teachers questioned, less than 20 percent, noted their use of picturebooks or newspapers (cf. Albright and Ariail 2005, 583-586). Regarding the reasons for reading aloud, the majority of teachers mentioned “to model aspects of fluent reading, such as pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, and style” and “to make texts more accessible” (ibid, 584). Both of these reasons are valid arguments in favor of reading aloud pieces of authentic literature, especially in a foreign language. Reading a picturebook to students can be far more than merely a demonstration of reading skills. It can be educational while being entertaining and as such seen as a welcome change in secondary schools. Albright and Ariail argue that “[r]esearch indicates that motivation, interest, and engagement are often enhanced when teachers read aloud to middle school students” (ibid, 582). Even if this mostly refers to L1 classrooms and middle school students, it is a factor to be considered for the upper secondary EFL classroom as well.

As has been established in this subchapter, reading aloud has various benefits for students’ listening and consequently reading and possibly writing skills. Nevertheless, the benefits can only be granted if teachers know how to do it well. Ur (2012) gives a little piece of advice on how to read aloud in the best possible way. She suggests, “[w]hen reading aloud, remember to read slowly, maintain occasional eye contact with students, and allow yourself to simplify or occasionally translate bits of the text” (106). The visual element of picturebooks is ideally suited for interactions and clarifying questions or explanations. The format further allows the teacher to create suspense from one double-spread to the next as well as opportunities to be read with emotion and enthusiasm.

**Speaking Skills**

Getting students to talk in a classroom setting often presents a challenge to teachers. Ur (2012) lists problems, such as students being shy, fearing criticism, not knowing what to say, not enough time for each student to talk, different personalities, and the use of the L1 because students consider it easier to express themselves in their native tongue (cf. 118). The introduction of picturebooks may be a welcome alternative. The topics, themes, characters,
language, and artwork may give students “a reason to speak” (Ur 2012, 122). Depending on the
tasks and activities, teachers can try to engage their students and get them to practice their
speaking skills while talking about the picturebook. When teachers instruct their students to
work in pairs or groups, it provides students with more time to talk. The more opportunities
they get to practice their speaking skills, the better.

**Reading Skills**

As Danielson (1992) implies, picturebooks for older readers in a middle school or high
school environment might be especially useful for “working with developmental readers and
with linguistically and culturally diverse students” (652). This statement supports the view that
picturebooks are especially beneficial for reluctant or struggling readers and intercultural
purposes. Major benefits are their contents and format. Yet, reading picturebooks can really be
beneficial for students of all ages and proficiency levels in a language learning setting, as will
be discussed below.

One of the perks picturebooks have to offer are their pictures, which function as a vital help
for readers and language learners. Birketveit (2015) clarifies, “[a]s picture books have at least
one picture on every double spread, these texts come with ample visual support that will enable
learners of English to cope with more advanced texts than they usually would” (1). When he
talks about the potential of comics, Delanoy (2017) also recognizes the benefits of “[d]ual
coding, e.g. words and pictures, [which] can facilitate understanding” (20). Hence, similar to
comics, picturebooks can lead to a sense of achievement for struggling readers and due to their
complexity still challenge more advanced students.

In this context, Bland (2015) mentions deep reading, a process which goes far beyond the
basic ability of being able to decode letters and words. She connects it with understanding texts,
engaging with them, and enjoying reading them. Consequently, deep reading is not functional
but rather an aesthetic pleasure. As it is challenging to develop deep reading, the images in
picturebooks can be of valuable assistance (cf. 26-27).

Closely connected to picturebooks’ benefits in regard to deep reading is their suitability for
independent and extended reading. While the listening subchapter was focused on a scenario
where the teacher reads a picturebook aloud to the whole class, now the focus is on students
reading picturebooks independently. A leading expert who examines the positive effects of
extensive reading is Krashen (2014). His studies “[…] have all confirmed that more free reading
results in better reading ability, better writing, larger vocabularies, better spelling and better control of complex grammatical constructions” (Krashen 2014, 15). Of course, students are free to choose whatever literary format suits them best or interests them most. Nevertheless, picturebooks being short and visually appealing may be a welcome choice for independent and free reading. Benedict (1992) implies that students can read more picturebooks than longer texts in the same timeframe. Additionally, they may profit from focusing on the collected works of an author/illustrator or a number of picturebooks dealing with a specific topic (cf. 34).

During my research, I came across a very interesting project started by Jillian Heise and called “#classroombookaday” (Heise 2018). On her website, www.classroombookaday.com, she describes her project as follows: “With a goal to read aloud a picture book every day of the school year, to students at ANY grade level, 180 complete texts are shared that grow classroom community and joy of reading” (ibid). The project introduced students to an extensive amount of reading material and may be used to introduce a new topic or theme, as well as a grammatical phenomenon or special event. Some teachers may claim that the curriculum does not allow the time to read a book in every lesson. However, variations such as reading a book a week or a month may still be considered and manageable.

If picturebooks are included regularly, they support students in many ways. Birketveit (2015) clarifies that “[t]hey can be a gateway to extensive reading as well as bridging the gap into longer canonical texts” (3). All reading strategies (predicting, inferring, summarizing etc.) can be practiced with the shorter texts and then applied to longer texts. This is one of the great benefits of using the brief but still complex format. Students can try to apply strategies they have learned while working with the simpler text in order to really understand the process. If they are successful with the shorter texts, they can be more motivated to apply them to longer texts.

As many scholars advise to link the teaching of reading and writing, Graham et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis to test this claim. They investigated whether an even combination of reading and writing in literacy programs has a positive influence on students’ skills in these areas. Their findings show that in fact, when reading and writing is taught together, students benefit from it and are able to equally improve their reading as well as their writing competence (cf. 1). These findings once more highlight the importance of an holistic teaching approach which includes all skills and competences in regard to teaching objectives.
Writing Skills

Before examining how writing skills can be nurtured by the use of picturebooks, it is necessary to establish how writing is generally practiced in language teaching. According to Ur (2012), “[w]riting is often – perhaps mainly – used […] as a vehicle for language practice and testing, rather than for the sake of the writing skill itself” (3), but because of online communication and social media, “writing for communication has increased” (ibid). Our world is globally connected and this is mainly established through writing. This is why the writing skill should be trained explicitly (cf. ibid). Elbow (2004) is of a similar opinion and specifically criticizes the dominance of reading over writing. He is convinced that writing supports learning and helps to facilitate reading competence and should as such be trained and included before reading activities (cf. 11).

As soon as American educators and researchers became aware of the importance of writing proficiency, they started to develop a model in the 1980s to help students to further improve and master their writing competences. Building on different theories and research findings, the 6+1 Trait® Writing Model of Instruction & Assessment was introduced by teachers for teachers as “an additional, complementary set of tools to aid in conceptualizing, assessing, and describing the qualities of writing” (Coe et al. 2011, 5). The model is envisioned to support teachers with instructing writing and most importantly providing feedback and discussing the writing process (cf. Coe et al. 2011, 5; Culham 2014, 23). Culham (2014), one of the leading advocates for the model, describes the underlying principles as follows: “conducting high-quality assessment that leads to focused instruction, establishing clear goals for teaching and learning the craft of writing, using a shared vocabulary to talk about writing, and weaving together revision and editing seamlessly and strategically” (23). In order to achieve better writing, the model includes strategies plus rubrics that help with evaluation, feedback, and revision (cf. Coe et al. 2011, 7). Moreover, in the center of the model are “6+1 key qualities that define quality writing” (Education Northwest 2012). The key qualities are also called traits and are: “ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation” (Coe et al. 2011, 5). The following figure gives an overview of the traits.

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4 For a detailed description of the seven traits see: https://educationnorthwest.org/traits/trait-definitions and Culham (2014, 43).
As a service to teachers and students in particular the scholars designed a more relatable visualization of the main six traits in the form of a house. This way, students can practice to build a better text with the six traits.

The principles as well as the writing model and traits which were established for L1 classrooms are very valuable and useful for the EFL classroom, which is why they are included in this subchapter. Furthermore, they are relevant for this thesis as Culham (2014) particularly includes picturebook suggestions to use in accordance with the writing model.
Miller (1998) points out that a part of students’ writing skills that needs to be trained is the “prewriting skill of brainstorming ideas for their creative writing” (379). Picturebooks present an ideal support system as their images and texts can be valuable inspirations (cf. ibid). In terms of the 6+1 Trait® Writing Model this aspect would be part of the ideas trait.

Ur (2012) presents a list of possible writing tasks that could be used in combination with picturebooks, including using the story or pictures as stimuli for responses to the book and for further creative writing, such as new stories, poems, and descriptions (cf. 158). Picturebooks seem ideal for creative writing (cf. Bland 2015, 27). However, it needs to be acknowledged that many students struggle or simply do not like creative writing assignments. Ur (2012) recommends to “provide much more structure and support” (158) for students that are not as creative as others. Another suggestion she makes to enhance motivation is to display accomplished writing pieces. Teachers can “post them on the class website, or on a noticeboard in the classroom, or read them out to the class (with the author’s permission, of course)” (ibid). These forms of presentation can be seen as a reward or an encouragement and students deserve to be encouraged.

3.1.2 Literary Literacy and Storytelling through Authentic Mentor Texts

When Delanoy (2017) reflects on the changes and challenges that students face due to the developments in media in the 21st century, he points out how such developments are affecting literature teaching and language learning (cf. 13). Thus, there are implications for communicative language learning as well as literary competences that have to be taken into consideration and implemented (cf. ibid), as has been done by Kramsch and Cope and Kalantzis.

Generally, the use of literature in teaching is recognized in research by theorists and experienced teachers for having positive effects on students’ motivation, ability to think creatively and critically, empathy and tolerance, and awareness of language as well as different cultures and conflicts, to mention only a few (cf. Ur 2012, 223-224).

Burwitz-Melzer (2014) adds that even though the use of literature in the foreign language classroom had successfully been implemented in the 1990s and continued to be a common practice in EFL classrooms, the PISA results changed the general conception (cf. 55). She claims that “at least in the German school context […] today, literature has become an ‘endangered species’ due to the interests of Chambers of Commerce and output-oriented Ministries of Education” (ibid). The impression I got while observing foreign language lessons
is that there is a huge amount of pressure regarding time and content, especially with the new regulations of standardized exams.

Nevertheless, the benefits of including literary texts are vast. Teachers should spend the time and effort to include literary texts, novels, plays, and picturebooks in their teaching and they should foster literary literacy skills. What is established in the school setting can be a lifelong gain, according to Burwitz-Melzer (2014). She argues we should “connect reading to our students’ lives and worlds and make them lifelong readers – in their mother tongue as well as in the L2” (Burwitz-Melzer 2014, 55). Burwitz-Melzer further claims that “literary literacy fosters holistic learning of a new language while offering excitement, fun and many new ideas to young people” (ibid, 56). In regard to the new ideas offered, as already mentioned in chapter 1.4.3, literary texts such as picturebooks often deal with challenging topics, concerning different cultures, people, and issues. This can be used to help adolescent learners to develop and enhance their social skills, as Burwitz-Melzer stresses (cf. ibid). Therefore, fostering literary literacy is not only important for L1 readers but also for all language learners in general.

As fictional picturebooks narrate fictional stories, they can be analyzed with students in terms of successful, artistic, and well-crafted storytelling. Volkmann (2015) underlines the important role literary texts such as picturebooks play in this context. He argues, “[r]eading literary texts helps develop story competence, more commonly known as narrative competence: This is defined as the ability to understand and tell stories, one of the prime cultural achievements of humans […]” (Volkmann 2015, 52). Volkmann’s mention of stories being major cultural human achievements relates to the oral tradition humans have been practicing since the early days. Those traditions and functions of storytelling as well as their importance in the EFL classroom today are also emphasized by Hass (2013, 4-5). Integrating picturebooks in the language classroom is an easy and beneficial way to discuss and foster students’ narrative competence.

One of the main arguments supporting the usefulness of picturebooks for the upper secondary EFL classroom is that they are authentic “mentor texts” (Culham 2014, 31). Culham (2014) sees “a mentor text as any text, print or digital, that you can read with a writer’s eye.” (31). As shown in the previous paragraph, picturebooks can serve as examples, mentor or “model texts” (Ur 2012, 161), demonstrating storytelling but also verbal and visual artistry in general. The meaningfulness of mentor texts as support systems is widely acknowledged (cf.
Ur 2012, 161; Scrivener 2011, 241) as is the potential of picturebooks serving as such (cf. Benedict 1992, 34; Ludlam 1992, 92-95; Culham 2014, 44).

Scrivener (2011, 242) lists the following aspects that can be analyzed with a mentor text:

- “The layout
- The overall message
- How the items are organised
- Specific phrases and sentences used
- Distinctive grammatical features
- The style and tone
- The effect on the reader”

Ludlam (1992) adds more features such as “genre”, “first-person monologues, poetry, and third-person narration” (95). Bishop and Hickman (1992) mention “form and structure” as well as “story patterns” (7). Scrivener’s bullet point named “style and tone” corresponds with Volkmann’s (2015) view that “[l]iterature furthers stylistic competence […]”, “[…] the ability to identify and define stylistic and structural features of literary texts and to be able to use the acquired skills when dealing with other literary texts” (52). Picturebooks provide excellent opportunities to examine narrative texts, test out strategies, and learn how to interpret and understand stories. These are all valuable practices that can be later adapted and applied to longer texts.

Authenticity is another keyword used in this thesis and related to materials in the educational context (cf. Scrivener 2011, 127). Picturebooks, like other pieces of literature, are authentic material containing “language […] being used fairly naturally” (ibid). Most English picturebooks are written for an English-speaking audience, if they are not translated from another language. Considering this, they are authentic and most beneficial for the EFL classroom. Their complex language also aligns with Krashen’s theory of language acquisition and comprehensible input which “would be i+1 (ie just above the current level)” (Krashen cited in Scrivener 2011, 127-128).

3.1.3 Visual Literacy

Next to literary literacy, visual literacy is another one of the multiple literacies that can be fostered by picturebooks. Burwitz-Melzer (2014) draws attention to the growing relevance of visual literacy in modern times which results from the vast amount of accessible visual formats such as films, picturebooks, comics, and graphic novels (cf. 56). Because of all these visual formats, “the ability to read images” (Birketveit 2015, 2) has become more and more essential
in our multimodal, visually dominated world (cf. Burke and Stagg Peterson 2007, 74). It is also the reason why visual literacy is one of the particular teaching objectives mentioned when working with picturebooks in the upper secondary EFL classroom.

In accordance with the increasing importance of visual literacy, Burwitz-Melzer calls for some changes in the educational practices in German speaking schools. She demands that “[t]eaching concepts, teaching objectives, the competences taught, the texts discussed, the methods used and the curriculum for teacher training have to be changed accordingly” (Burwitz-Melzer 2014, 58). Through my experiences at AAU as well as UWF in Pensacola, Florida, it seems like this is already in progress. To what extent or if this approach has already reached Austrian schools is not apparent yet. However, this might be another interesting topic to explore in further research.

The impact images have on our lives and our culture is evident and explained by scholars such as Whalley (2004). He states that children discover how to decode images, compared to text, fairly early (cf. Whalley 2004, 318). Most students are likely to have had the opportunity to experience picturebooks at home when they were little. The question is how deep their examination and involvement were at that time. When they reencounter them in a distinctive educational context and get the opportunity to work with picturebooks in the EFL classroom, they once more get the opportunity “to learn how to read or to listen to a literary text and to decode a verbal and a visual mode and understand their interaction” (Burwitz-Melzer 2014, 63). This is exactly why picturebooks should be used in the secondary EFL classroom. Even advanced readers and language speakers can strive to understand the format on a deeper level which requires a thorough analysis of the verbal and visual elements displayed in the picturebook.

Giorgis (1999) welcomes the inclusion of picturebooks in the secondary school context and states that “[a]s our society becomes more visually oriented, it is good to know that secondary students can gain additional knowledge of artistic style and technique through the reading and viewing of picture books” (51). To Giorgis, it is clear that students may know how to read pictures but need assistance in mastering deeper levels of examination in regard to style and technique. The list of visual features which can be examined in a picturebook are similar to the aspects analyzed in a text. It is also a matter of style, technique, materials, and choices made by the illustrators. Whatever decision illustrators make, the reader is challenged to analyze and
interpret it. While doing so, readers may rely on their “knowledge of artistic conventions” (Nikolajeva 2013, 252), which includes positioning of characters, colors, or other graphical ways to depict or indicate emotions, moods, and meanings (cf. ibid).

The consequences of the fact that illustrations in picturebooks “evoke emotions” (Fuchs 2017, 29) and have “emotive power” (Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson 2003, 764) are further developed by Nikolajeva (2013). She claims that picturebooks can be used to help with the training of emotional literacy. Through picturebook content, the characters portrayed, and emotionally charged pictures, children and adolescents can develop and train empathy which is beneficial for their personal development and social life (cf. Nikolajeva 2013, 249). This is just another one of the multiple literacies connected to visuals that can be supported through the work with picturebooks.

One example of a successful multidisciplinary project that used picturebooks at the secondary level is described by Burke and Stagg Peterson (2007). Their project combined history, visual arts, and English/theatre arts. The unit was taught over six weeks and focused on World War II. The aim of the project was to help students analyze and comprehend the historic facts but also relate to individual fates. During the project, students enhanced their visual and literary literacy through a presentation of elements of design, discussions, readings, role-plays, and writing responses. The materials used were poems, textbook chapters, picturebooks, films, photos, and writing prompts. The elements of design which were introduced by the teacher and analyzed by the students were line, shape, and color (cf. Burke and Stagg Peterson 2007, 75-77). This project impressively demonstrates the powerful impact picturebooks can have on students’ thinking and their visual as well as literary literacy development, which should be explored in the EFL context as well. Picturebooks present an ideal opportunity for multidisciplinary projects and motivational boosts, as will be analyzed in the next subchapter.

3.1.4 Motivation, Engagement, and Empowerment

“Motivation is a crucial factor in successful language learning; and a good deal of research has been carried out on how and why learners are motivated to learn, and what teachers can do to enhance such motivation” (Ur, 2012, 10).

This quote by Ur (2012) was chosen as a brief introduction for this subchapter, which deals with the closely connected objectives of student motivation, engagement, and empowerment. It underlines the importance motivation has in the whole process of language learning and the
following paragraphs focus on ways to increase these objectives in general and with the help of picturebooks in particular.

Ur (2012) discusses multiple possibilities to increase students’ motivation. First, she highlights that teachers should be able to communicate the importance of the foreign language and the benefits students will gain from being able to use English now and in the future. Second, she emphasizes the role teachers play in supporting their students, raising their confidence, and helping them succeed. Third, Ur notes that language activities should be well chosen and interesting (cf. Ur 2012, 11). As an example, she mentions “game-like activities” (ibid). All of these three steps to increase motivation can be supported by the use of picturebooks. Teachers choosing picturebooks and working on them with their students can successfully raise students’ confidence and improve their foreign language abilities on many levels. Working with picturebooks can also be entertaining as has now been stated on various occasions throughout this thesis. Students may be intrinsically motivated to explore the stories, messages, and art displayed in picturebooks. If there is an interesting and engaged discussion in the class about a picturebook, students might also want to be integrated in the discussion and thus, involve themselves.

Students’ involvement may be encouraged by the verbal and/or visual narratives in picturebooks and be a reaction to said narratives. Bland (2015) is convinced that “[p]ictures may, for example, trigger an affective response of pleasure, displeasure, tension, relaxation or excitement; or the response could be an emotional one of anger, fear, jealousy, pride or even love” (26). Whilst this quote is focused on the visual level, other scholars comment on the emotional power of literary texts. Da Rocha (2017) promotes the use of literature in order to meet the need of differentiation when she notes, “[...]texts evoke manifold emotional responses, which encourage learners at different levels of language proficiency to participate actively” (169). Literary texts and picturebooks in particular have the power to engage students of all language levels if their verbal and visual contents are well-crafted. Students are able to form and voice an opinion on the contents, even if it is in their L1 to begin with.

Birketveit (2015) sees the same potential when she adds “[r]eading high-interest stories and texts is a pleasurable way of increasing learner motivation and learning language in a meaningful context” (6). When she uses the term meaningful context, she refers to the way that “[i]nstead of focusing on language in isolation, the target language becomes the medium in which content knowledge and cultural understanding can be learned” (Birketveit 2015, 6). By
integrating picturebooks in the EFL classroom, teachers can still discuss linguistic features and raise students’ language awareness. Yet they can do that in the context of the story and hence, in a more entertaining and pleasurable manner.

As Danielson (1992) puts it, picturebooks “are often motivators, since they are both beautiful and charming while they present human experiences in microcosm” (652). The potential of picturebooks having the power to be highly motivational and increase students’ participation is also recognized by Miller (1998, 376), Ludlam (1992, 92), Murphy (2009, 20), Evans (2013, 233) and the other authors cited so far.

Burwitz-Melzer (2014) offers a list of student target groups that might be particularly motivated through picturebooks. Some of these groups are students who are

- interested in modern visual art forms
- or inexperienced with literature
- or easily daunted by literary challenges like longer written texts,
- or simply want a change in the choice of literary texts.” (Burwitz-Melzer 2014, 57-58)

All of the attributes mentioned in Burwitz-Melzer’s list may be found in any EFL classroom. Upper secondary students are probably less likely to be inexperienced with literature, yet they might not have had the chance, reason, or desire to read literary texts in the foreign language. Either way, working with a picturebook can be a welcome modification.

The ways in which students’ behavior, engagement, and class atmosphere in a L1 High School setting can be positively affected by the inclusion of picturebooks have been closely examined in a qualitative case study by Reiker (2011). Her research demonstrates that picturebooks are not only suitable for struggling readers but can challenge and serve older students as well (cf. Reiker 2011, 4). Reiker comes to the conclusion that picturebooks had a positive influence on “student engagement, classroom community, […] skill and concept acquisition” as well as “[…] relationships” (ibid, 48). She also noticed “a spirit of joy in the classroom” (ibid). Again, all of these benefits are appealing for any teacher.

Concluding from the previous paragraphs, what is crucial for an effective interaction with picturebooks is the teacher. Hassett and Scott Curwood (2009) reflect on the roles teachers have to take on when teaching multimodal texts and multiple literacies. They describe how the educators from the research project had to facilitate students’ imagination by highlighting multimodal features of the picturebooks, while still keeping them focused and engaging them in discussions (cf. Hassett and Scott Curwood 2009, 280). Teachers acting as facilitators is one
of the key messages here. Hsiu-Chih (2008), who conducted “a study investigating EFL teachers’ views on the educational values of English picture story books in Taiwan” (47), comes to the same conclusion. Although the teachers in this study taught on a primary level, they “perceived themselves as a mediator whose job was […] to encourage participation and interaction” (ibid). Consequently, a teacher should be able to execute different roles, such as being a role model in regard to reading and interpreting strategies as well as a facilitator to enable understanding, critical thinking, imagination, and interaction.

Empowerment is another vital aspect connected to motivation and engagement. The term and its implications are examined in great detail by Bland (2013). In her view, reading “is empowering from the very first steps with picturebooks” (Bland 2013, 27). One significant key phrase she uses is “pleasure reading” (ibid). Students can be led to experiencing pleasure reading through picturebooks from the primary level onwards. They should be enabled and supported to continue this process in and outside the secondary classroom as it increases their motivation (ibid). In Bland’s words, “[t]he motivational power of picturebooks may help initiate the habit of extensive pleasure reading – crucial for language acquisition, intercultural learning, relaxation and countless further educational goals” (ibid, 36). Bland refers mainly to the primary context because the sooner learners discover the appeal of books, the better (cf. ibid). Nevertheless, it is highly applicable for the higher secondary L1 classroom as well as the EFL classroom.

Finally, I want to address that some teachers may want to use picturebooks for joy and in order to reward their students. Once students are hooked and convinced that reading picturebooks is a good and fun activity, teachers can definitely reward a class after successfully completing a challenging task by reading a picturebook together at the end of the class period or the beginning of the next. However, picturebooks should not be reduced to solely being a fun change. They should be taken seriously as they have the potential to be pleasurable and still educational as well.

3.2 Challenges

The selection process as well as the prejudices against the format can be challenging for teachers. Yet there are various suggestions to be found by experienced teachers and guidelines that might give people an idea of how to choose the right book for a certain class and purpose. Some of these guidelines will be discussed in the next subchapter.
3.2.1 Selecting the Right Book

There are multiple lists of possible picturebooks to use for different levels, purposes, and content areas, as noted by Costello and Kolodziej (2006). However, they argue that such lists usually still focus on primary classrooms. Moreover, these lists are never complete and might lead to exquisite books being overlooked. (cf. Costello and Kolodziej 2006, 28). Of course, these lists do have validity as they serve as a good initial orientation for interested teachers. Yet it seems not only reasonable but useful that Costello and Kolodziej suggest criteria for teachers that guide them in their selection. Their guidelines include several factors which “relate to the teacher, the purpose of using the book, and the book itself” (ibid).

First, it is essential that teachers are excited about the books themselves (cf. Costello and Kolodziej 2006, 28). Excitement about a topic or book is mirrored in the way it is presented. If teachers are not interested in the book or do not like the story, characters, or artwork, it is likely that students will notice and may be influenced in a negative way. Ur (2012) agrees when she advises, “[c]hoose literature you like. If you can choose which literary works to teach, choose ones that are favourites of your own. You will probably teach them better and enjoy the process; students are also likely to learn and enjoy them more” (224). Miletta (1992) speaks from experience and elaborates, “I want to communicate a love of literature to my students, and I can only do that with stories that engage me, making me think about the thematic material long after I have finished reading it” (555). This quote from the daily life of a teacher demonstrates how important it is that teachers believe in the material they use.

Second, the picturebooks should correlate with the purpose and objectives of a lesson (cf. Costello and Kolodziej 2006, 28). Depending on what they intend to achieve with their lesson, teachers should choose picturebooks which are most likely to help them achieve their aims.

Third, there are general factors which should be taken into consideration and they “include the book’s intensity of information, ability to meet high literary standards, and portrayal of diversity” (ibid). What is meant by high literary standards is that the books contain a broad range of vocabulary and elaborate writing (cf. ibid). Books that fulfill these criteria can be used to discuss literary devices, figures of speech, story grammar, and character development, just to mention a few aspects.

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Costello and Kolodziej mention that book awards such as the Caldecott Award are an indication of quality that may help with the selection (cf. Costello and Kolodziej 2006, 28). For the language arts classroom, Costello and Kolodziej suggest selecting picturebooks with “well-patterned story structure with a modicum of ambiguity” (ibid, 29). When picturebooks are used for storytelling or modelling writing, it makes sense that they should fulfill these criteria. They can then be used in diverse ways, for discussing story grammar, plot, characters, as well as creative writing assignments.

Two final valuable tips by Costello and Kolodziej (2006) are firstly, to stay updated about newly published picturebooks by following articles and reviews in children’s literature journals, and secondly, to reflect upon how effective the picturebook lesson was (cf. 32). It is important to make use of a variety of materials and strategies. It may well be that one kind of book resonates especially well with one class and another type is better suited for another class. Subsequently, reflecting teaching attempts and experiences is essential. When teachers reflect and know their students, they will know which books to choose after a few tries.

Bishop and Hickman (1992) present another list of guidelines that can be taken into consideration when selecting the right book for a group of students or a specific teaching purpose.

First, Bishop and Hickman (1992) argue that “[t]he quality of a picture book is greatly dependent on the quality of its art” (7). The illustrations have to be aesthetically and visually appealing, at least for the teacher who selects them. Obviously, different people like different styles of art and illustrations, but teachers should judge the quality of pictures and text and choose a book accordingly. Furthermore, the art should be effectively supporting the tone and mood of the story (cf. ibid, 8).

Second, the quality of the text is another essential criterion discussed by Bishop and Hickman. This criterion might appear to be obvious. Yet the authors argue that there are picturebooks with excellent art but texts that do not match the visual quality. Bishop and Hickman explain what literary artistry in a picturebook looks like (cf. ibid). They explain, “[t]he brevity of picture books dictates that the text must often be concise, conveying a good deal of meaning with a few well-chosen words, imaginatively used” (ibid). This description of the challenges picturebook authors have to overcome with their texts is on point.

The third indicator of a quality picturebook, according to Bishop and Hickman, is the well-working relationship and interdependence of illustrations and text. They ”must seem as if they
were made for each other, not forced into an unhappy relationship” (Bishop and Hickman 1992, 8). This description is very vivid and helpful parameter for what to look for in a high-quality and useful picturebook.

Giorgis (1999) also gives advice about which books teachers should select. She points out the different issues and topics being addressed and highlights that picturebooks should be included into secondary education in general, not just in language classrooms (cf. 51). Depending on their topics, picturebooks can be useful for history, math, science, music, and of course art (cf. ibid, 52). An interesting tip by Giorgis for all teachers, no matter the subject area, is to use picturebook biographies (cf. ibid). With the support of such books, students are introduced to the lives, works, and theories of famous musicians, artists, scientists, or authors in a more interesting and engaging way. In accordance with Costello and Kolodziej (2006) and Bishop and Hickman (1992), Giorgis (1999) recommends that teachers should be aware of why they choose a specific picturebook. The books should be interesting and visually pleasing. She also mentions that teachers themselves should be enthusiastic about the book they are about to read aloud (cf. 52). Miletta (1992) emphasizes the importance of selecting picture books with relevant and current topics (cf. 555).

With regard to secondary students in particular, Burke and Stagg Peterson (2007), caution teachers to be careful concerning the complexity of the book, which is displayed in the theme, the text, and the illustrations (cf. 74). The variety of picturebooks on the market is so wide that teachers should take enough time and thorough consideration before they choose a book for their upper secondary EFL classroom. Da Rocha (2017) hints at the very practical problem which is the issue of display in bookstores and the common lack of differentiation between picturebooks for children and more complex, sophisticated, and multilayered picturebooks (cf. 169). A solution to this problem is thorough research, suggestions by colleagues, tips in teacher networks on Facebook or Instagram, as well as recommendations by experts, awards and all other tips mentioned earlier.

A final suggestion to be considered is to include students in the selection process (cf. Miletta 1992, 556). Once the value of picturebooks is understood and accepted, students may really enjoy doing more research and finding the best books available for their class and their suggestions may be well worth the consideration.
3.2.2 Overcoming Prejudices against the Format

“A novelist may convey a message with perfection over three hundred pages. A poet may do it in ten lines. […] And the writers and illustrators of picture books use their medium to evoke the same feelings, to convey the same messages within the confines of ‘one bensy book’” (Carlisle 1992, 57).

Overcoming the prejudices against picturebooks is the first important step to explore their potential. The introductory quote by Carlisle incorporates the view that picturebooks have the ability to evoke feelings and convey messages just like any other literary format. They accomplish it on a few pages through their special form. Still, as has previously been mentioned, there are many critics not only in the academic field but in schools as well. Thus, this subchapter is another opportunity to highlight the advantages of picturebooks and convince sceptics, in the L1 as well as the EFL classroom, to explore and benefit from them.

Da Rocha (2017) claims that comics and graphic novels are one step ahead of picturebooks in regard to their recognition for educational use with older students (cf. 169). According to her, the criticism that picturebooks are “primarily aimed at native speaker children in kindergarten and elementary school is difficult to refute” (ibid). As was already pointed out in the first chapter, there are many voices that regard picturebooks as not being real and valuable literature, at least for older readers. They disregard picturebooks for Middle and High School and have the prejudice that they were “left behind with kindergarten and the bedtime story” (Bishop and Hickman 1992, 1). When Giorgis (1999) sums up the critical voices, she highlights the frequent questioning of the value picturebooks could have for adolescent or mature students (cf. 51). However, Bishop and Hickman already argued in 1992, when they described their work with picturebooks in their university classes, that they consider picturebooks to be “real literature, worthy of study, differing from other literature only in its adaptations to an implied primary audience of young, less experienced readers” (1). Contemporary picturebooks, not only postmodern ones, offer so much more depth than is granted to them. Of course, there are simpler picturebooks for young L1 children, but there is also an impressive number of far more challenging and inspiring picturebooks that are aimed at an older and more diverse readership. These picturebooks can undoubtedly contribute to teaching objectives and positive experiences. Fuchs (2017) for example addresses picturebooks with ambiguous language, references to well-known literary figures, or pieces of art history, to underline her argument of the appropriateness of picturebooks for all ages (cf. 29).
As a result, Da Rocha (2017) describes the development of the format as follows: “the picturebook seems to ‘grow up’” (170). Danielson (1992) points out that the use of picturebooks in classrooms with older students “has been documented as successful” (652).

As the promising results are becoming more and more evident and acknowledged in the academic discourse and the field, it is the student body that needs to be convinced as well. Scholars agree that the way teachers introduce picturebooks to their class has a major impact on students and their willingness to work with them. Giorgis (1999) is one of these scholars who firmly believes that the introduction of the book can affect students’ preconceptions significantly and teachers should not apologize before reading a picturebook. They should not be considered inferior texts and clearly never be introduced as such (cf. 53). Obviously, this is a challenge for the first time teachers decide to include picturebooks in secondary classrooms. As soon as students are used to the format and aware of the complexity and potential, this challenge is probably overcome. Rief (1992) explains her approach by stating, “[i]f I’m reading them, they realize it’s okay for them to read them” (72). The teacher functioning as a role model is a pivotal point. If students see their teacher reading and valuing picturebooks, the stigma of them being only for younger readers may be quickly overcome.

Ludlam (1992) writes about his experiences in his High School English L1 classroom and about how he started to include picturebooks into his courses. In order to overcome his students’ prejudices, he chose a unique approach. He developed a course in which his students would have a look at and discuss picturebooks from a distinctive perspective. His students were told that the course was meant for parents, meaning them already being parents or being future parents. As he states, this approach worked well for his class. They started to value the books with their future kids in mind, while also discussing literary elements (cf. 91). He explains his experience as follows:

“I was aware that the students might consider reading children’s books an insult both to their age and intelligence; however, I felt that these books, especially the picture books, are a very real part of our culture. Many of my students had not been read to nor experienced storytelling at home. Much of their knowledge of stories came from television and VCRs. I hoped that my course could begin to help my students fill in the gaps and develop a new excitement about reading” (Ludlam 1992, 91).

By choosing this approach, Ludlam seems to have given in to the critics’ view of picturebooks being inferior texts meant for children. Yet his approach has to be understood in
terms of a bigger picture. Ludlam used this approach to overcome his students’ initial concerns. Once students work with picturebooks, they recognize their potential not only for children but for all levels of readers and most importantly themselves.

All of Ludlam’s fears and hopes can be transferred to the upper secondary EFL classroom. Older students might be particularly sensitive when they are first confronted with picturebooks in a classroom setting. Subsequently, they may be resistant in the beginning. Teachers should let students be critical and voice their concerns and opinions but highlight why the book was selected and what the learning objectives are. Teachers and students should be open to new experiences and different perspectives. Once the first hurdles are overcome and a class seems to like a specific book, other works of the same authors/illustrators or similar books could be introduced. Or, as has already been suggested in the previous subchapter, students can be invited to do research themselves, find a book they like, and argue why they like it in class. The right activities may contribute to students’ enjoyment and eagerness to work with picturebooks. If they are frequently integrated in the lessons, former concerns may vanish.

As Bishop and Hickman (1992) argue, picturebooks have similar benefits as novels or other pieces of literature (cf. 10). In order to overcome prejudices about the format, critics should be reminded of these benefits, because, “[t]hese potentials exist whether the audience for picture books is four, or fourteen, or forty” (ibid).

3.3 Picturebooks and Textbooks

This subchapter deals with the comparison of picturebooks and traditional textbooks or course books. The analysis deals with the role of the two formats in the EFL classroom, their similarities as well as their differences.

To begin with, it is debated how much time is or should be devoted to one format or the other. Da Rocha (2017) argues that although there is an increasing interest and various recommendations of how to work with multimodal texts and literature in language teaching, “foreign language teaching in several countries still remains predominantly course-book-based” (169). Standardized testing as well as other factors, such as not enough time, supplies, or proficiency, seem to hinder teachers from working with picturebooks and their likes (cf. Da Rocha 2017, 169). This is unfortunate, as picturebooks can be an ideal addition to the classroom, because they offer more learning opportunities than course books or textbooks alone. Birketveit (2015), for example, stresses their authenticity in regard to content and
language (cf. 1). The value of picturebooks as authentic materials has already been discussed but is highlighted here once more.

One difference between the formats is explained by Cope and Kalantzis (2015). They indicate that knowledge which is presented in textbooks can be tested and assessed. The results of these exams relate to points, marks, or grades. However, the focus is rarely on the acquired knowledge and its benefits (cf. Cope and Kalantzis 2015, 7). As Cope and Kalantzis argue, “[t]he rewards of school success were then in the scores and the rankings achieved, extrinsic rewards less than intrinsic pleasures of coming-to-know” (ibid). Based on these observations, it can be inferred that constantly relying on and working with textbooks can be demotivating for students. Integrating authentic texts, such as picturebooks, may be a welcome relief, motivational boost, and source for learning as well as enjoyment.

A second difference, and maybe one of the greatest between textbooks and authentic material such as picturebooks is explained by Ong (1958). He claims that “[t]he textbook is a digestible synopsis, divided to manageable chunks, and with ideas ordered from those that are more elementary to more complex, […]” (Ong cited in Cope and Kalantzis 2015, 7). Textbooks are typically structured into carefully considered units, which is definitely useful for learning and teaching. The progression from simple to more complex content offers support and also orientation. Ur (2012) points out that because of its structure and organization, a textbook “provides a clear framework” (198). The selected texts and contents are also carefully chosen for a particular language level (cf. ibid). In fact, this may be one of the main reasons why teachers frequently rely on textbooks or course books when they are planning their lessons.

However, textbooks have obvious disadvantages as well. Ur (2012) names “inadequacy”, “irrelevance, lack of interest”, “cultural inappropriateness”, and “limited range of level” (198). Even though textbooks are constantly updated and further developed, they are still far from being authentic material. Furthermore, they hardly ever offer variations for different levels, which would be useful for several classes (cf. ibid). The demand for differentiation can be catered to with picturebooks and activities designed for students with all kinds of different needs, abilities, and preferences. Subsequently, including colorful and complex picturebooks and other sources of authentic material engages more students than a short excerpt in a textbook. Bland (2013) further questions the linguistic quality of altered texts in textbooks (cf. 7). In contrast, picturebooks commonly display artistic language, which can be seen as an additional argument in favor of their use.
The visual element in picturebooks is also distinctive from images in textbooks. Bland (2014b) argues that “[t]he pictures in EFL textbooks for young learners are nearly always overdetermining, stylized, stereotyped and crude illustrations, limiting a creative response” (87). Although Bland focuses on pictures for young learners, stereotypes and limited room for creativity are also issues with textbooks for older students. Picturebooks on the other hand offer more complexity and therefore more reason to think critically, to respond creatively, and to engage with the text on a deeper level (cf. ibid).

Giorgis (1999) and Birketveit (2015) both stress that picturebooks compared to other authentic texts are especially suited for the classroom use as they are brief and easy to integrate (cf. Giorgis 1999, 53; Birketveit 2015, 2). Birketveit (2015) even calls them “ideal texts for EFL” (2) because “they offer the reader the pleasure of reading whole stories instead of extracts of stories much used in course books” (ibid).

Picturebooks might be short but they present whole narrative stories in text and image, which adds to the possible ways in which they can be incorporated into the lesson. They can be used to fill a whole lesson or function as support and are a valuable addition to the textbook and other sources.
II Picturebooks as Language Learning Tools – Example for the Secondary EFL Classroom

In order to be able to evaluate the potential of the exemplary picturebook for the secondary EFL classroom, the picturebook itself has to be taken under examination. The following analysis is based on Staiger’s five-dimensional model for picturebook analysis.

In his introduction, Staiger (2014) argues that examining a narrative picturebook is not only about the content of the text and illustrations but also about the way in which the content is presented. He recognizes that analyzing picturebooks is a complex interdisciplinary task (cf. 12). As has been discussed in the previous chapters about the definition and features of picturebooks, text and illustrations share the responsibility of carrying the story. Their relationship as well as the interdependence between them is one of the most fascinating things about the format. The concept of visual literacy and its demands add to the complexity.

The following figure displays the connection between Staiger’s five dimensions that are all interconnected and provide a holistic approach to analyzing picturebooks.

![Figure 3: Five-dimensional model for picturebook analysis by Michael Staiger (2014, 13)](image)

The first dimension mentioned is the narrative dimension. This dimension includes common criteria from narratology and literary analysis. Staiger notes that examining this dimension means covering the content of text and images (meaning the story, the plot, topics and themes, the story world and setting, as well as the characters) and also how it is conveyed (narrative perspective, representation of thoughts and feelings, and embedded narratives) (cf. Staiger 2014, 14-15).

The second dimension consists of all the textual and linguistic elements. It includes word choice, sentence structure, structure of the text, coherence, as well as style. Staiger further indicates that the visual representation of the text (capitals and sizes) is to be considered as well (cf. ibid, 17-18).
Illustrations, images, and all the visuals constitute the third dimension of picturebook analysis. The categories of this dimension are lines, colors, space, positioning, as well as layout (cf. Staiger 2014, 18).

Dimension number four is focused on the intermodal relationship between text and images in picturebooks. In his description of this dimension Staiger relies on established findings from previous studies and theories for example by Schwarcz (1982), Nikolajeva and Scott (2006), as well as Thiele (2011). Staiger highlights that both semiotic systems, verbal and visual codes, have significant features. While visuals are especially suited to illustrate objects, people and spaces, texts in picturebooks are used to depict abstract concepts as well as thoughts and courses of action. As far as the relationships between texts and pictures are concerned, Staiger distinguishes five types. The first possibility is a symmetrical relationship, meaning that text and image contain the same information. The second type where both text and images add something to each other is called complementary. The third type listed is expansion or enhancement. Counterpoint means that text and illustrations convey different information but are still part of the same narration. Contrary to that, the last type could be classified as the two semiotic systems contradicting each other. An analysis of the verbal and visual codes throughout a whole book is likely to reveal more than just one type of relationship. (cf. Staiger 2014, 19-20)

The final one of Staiger’s dimensions covers the paratext. An analysis of this dimension sheds light on the length, the paper, the distribution (print or digital), the title, the cover, and the endpaper of a picturebook (cf. ibid, 20-21).

Following the picturebook analysis based on Staiger’s model there will be exemplary activities that could be connected to The Word Collector in the secondary EFL classroom. In accordance with Ur, activities are understood to have “two objectives: learning of some aspect of the language; and an outcome that can be discussed or evaluated” (Ur 2012, 43). Furthermore, the focus of the exemplary activities is on creative language play, the demands of multiple literacies and interactive language learning.

Most of the activities involve collaborative work, which is described as pair or group work. The decision whether to work in pairs or groups should be made by the teacher in regard to the dynamics of the class. In general, it can be stated that “pair work is far easier to organize than group work: it just involves turning to face a partner, rather than actually moving tables and chairs to get into groups” (ibid, 119). Nevertheless, both options could be beneficial depending on the purpose and goal of the lesson/activity.
Ur (2012) suggests several possible follow-up activities after reading and examining a text. Yet, she advises not to use too many activities at a time, only one or two (cf. 40-41). This is useful advice that shall be highlighted, taken into consideration, and included in this introduction to the exemplary activities based on reading and studying *The Word Collector*.

Her advice to use literary texts and picturebooks as such primarily for interpretative activities and discussions is acknowledged as well (cf. ibid, 224). Teachers are the ones that will decide which kind of activities to combine with the book depending on the purpose and topic of their lesson. The activities presented are simply suggestions and options. Ur excludes the element of style from her claims. As she is convinced that, “[i]f there are stylistic features that contribute to the impact (drama, aesthetic impression, humour, etc.) of the work, then this is an ideal context for teaching about them” (ibid, 225). In which way this is relevant for *The Word Collector* will be established in the next chapter.

All of the activities presented will include suggestions for the level, the approximate time needed, a description of objectives, materials, and the activity itself. Further mentioned will be possible challenges and sometimes extensions as well as variations.

### 4 *The Word Collector* by Peter H. Reynolds

The book chosen for analysis is a picturebook written and illustrated by Peter Hamilton Reynolds. The reasons for choosing this book are diverse but there are two major reasons which influenced the decision. First and foremost, I personally think that Reynolds managed to combine a simple but clever text, with an inspiring story, which has philosophical depth, and endearing illustrations. This is why I regard this picturebook to be worthy of sharing with as many students/readers as possible. The second reason is based on how Reynolds includes the topic of vocabulary expansion and thus, language learning into his text, I figured this picturebook had a lot of potential for analysis and teaching purposes. Whether my first impression was accurate will be examined throughout this chapter.

Peter H. Reynolds is a Canadian author and illustrator who has written and illustrated 12 books and illustrated about 46 more books written by other authors (cf. The Blue Bunny Bookstore 2018a). He further founded a bookshop in 2003, called The Blue Bunny Bookstore, in Massachusetts (cf. The Blue Bunny Bookstore 2018b). Reynolds’ best-known books are *Sky Color* (2000), *The Dot* (2003), and *Ish* (2004). All three books focus on creativity and how to encourage it. *The Dot* and *Ish* have been translated into various languages and even been
animated for screen. Peter H. Reynolds also won several awards for his works. Reynolds has collaborated with his twin brother Paul on four children’s books. The first one, *Going Places*, was published in 2014. Moreover, in 1996 the two brothers founded the media company, FableVision, Inc, focused on educational content for children (cf. The Blue Bunny Bookstore 2018c). The media company is described as using “storytelling and technology to create positive programming and products to help all learners navigate their full potential […]and] now encompasses two educational organizations: FableVision Studios, […], and FableVision Learning, […]”(ibid). Reynolds is passionate about fostering creativity and enabling learning, which is why FableVision Learning is supposed to support teachers with useful tools that focus on five skills: “creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking – and compassion” (FableVision Learning 2018).

Reynolds’ mission of using “media to tell stories that matter and challenge us to reach our full potential” (The Blue Bunny Bookstore 2018c) also shines through his newest book *The Word Collector*.


On the scholastic.com website, the suggested grades for this book are: “PreK-K, 1-2, 3-5” (Scholastic 2018). However, as has been argued throughout this thesis, the age range and grade levels are just a suggestion for parents and teachers. The book has more potential, especially for older students, which will be examined in the following subchapters.

### 4.1 Analysis

Before suggesting exemplary activities that can be combined with reading *The Word Collector* in the secondary EFL classroom, the book and its elements will be discussed in the light of Staiger’s (2014) five-dimensional model.

#### 4.1.1 Narrative Dimension

The first dimension to be examined is the narrative dimension, which is composed of verbal and visual codes.

To begin with, there is the story and plot to be determined. *The Word Collector* tells the story of a young boy called Jerome, who loves to collect words. The first page does not start with Jerome’s story but with a short introduction about the overall theme which is collecting things.
The book begins with a simple statement: “Collectors collect things...” (Reynolds 2018, 1). It then presents people who collect things such as stamps, coins, rocks, art, bugs, baseball cards, and comic books on the first double spread. Jerome, the protagonist, is only mentioned in the text with the question: “And Jerome? What did HE collect?” The third page introduces Jerome and his hobby. The book continues with displaying what kind of words Jerome collects. He collects words he hears, sees and reads. He likes words he considers to be short and sweet, or finds interesting because they have two or multiple syllables and sound like songs. Some words are unknown to him at first, but he really likes to pronounce them. With other words Jerome finds that their sounds fit their meaning perfectly, such as ‘torrential’. Jerome is shown collecting his words in different scrapbooks and organizing them according to semantic fields. Then, one day, when he transports his scrapbooks, Jerome slips and all the words land on the ground. This is the moment Jerome starts to notice new connections. In the jumbled mess he sees big words next to little words and sad words next to dreamy words. Thus, he places the words together on a string and constructs new relationships between them. He also uses them to write poems and songs. On page 21 and 22 the reader’s attention is brought to the power of words, when Jerome realizes the gravity of phrases such as “I understand”, “I’m sorry”, “Thank you”, and “You matter”. Jerome continues to collect more words to be able to share his thoughts, feelings, and dreams with the world. Then, one afternoon, he climbs up a hill and throws his word collection into the wind. Down in the valley, children catch his words. The last double spread displays Jerome looking down from the hill smiling. The story ends with Jerome being happy and unable to express his happiness.

**Topics and Themes**

The basic topic of the book is collecting words. Some of the apparent themes are: being aware of language and words, enjoying language, playing and being creative with words, and most importantly finding your voice as well as being able to voice your opinions, thoughts, feelings and dreams and share them with others. It is also suggested that there are always new words with interesting sounds and meanings that we can learn about and add to our personal collection.

*The Word Collector* is a seemingly simple story about a boy collecting words. The structure is linear and easy to follow. There is not much happening in terms of action and incidents, apart from the final sharing of Jerome’s words with the world. Yet, the content is quite complex, as it not only presents linguistic features, but addresses the meaning and impact of language. As
such, it can be embedded in a philosophical discourse about language and used to raise language awareness.

This story is inspiring in many ways. First, it pictures how Jerome collects his favorite words, is creative with language, and able to express his thoughts and feelings. This might motivate students to also start collecting words and be creative with not only English but maybe also their first language. Second, Jerome gathers even more words only to share them with others. In fact, he gives his words away and is left literally speechless but happy. This cannot only be inspiring but also evoke critical thoughts about the ability to express oneself and the value of freedom of speech. Furthermore, illiteracy and its challenges can be discussed.

Setting

Staiger (2014) notes that setting is usually illustrated in the images rather than in the text (cf. 15). Due to the brevity of the majority of picturebook texts this practice seems reasonable and can be detected in *The Word Collector* as well. The picturebook does not explicitly present a fixed setting. American readers might think the story takes place somewhere in the United States, which is likely as the author is from the United States as well. Yet, due to the lack of apparent placement and the diverse characters presented throughout the book, international readers might also place the story in their country, or city. This is a smart decision on the author’s part, as successful books are translated and published in different countries and will be probably even more successful when a broad audience can enjoy and relate to them.

Regarding time, there are little to no details given in the text or the illustrations which would suggest a time in which the story takes place or how much time passes in the course of the story. It can be assumed, nevertheless, that the story is placed in modern times, as there is neither specific mention of it happening in the past in the text nor illustrations of costumes referring to past times. The fact that there is no specific time mentioned again could make the story more universally relatable and hence, maybe more successful.

It is apparent that time and place do not seem to be an integral part of the story. Martinez and Harmon (2012) came to the same conclusion with many of their examined picturebooks for younger readers. They further note that especially in picturebooks about historical events, mostly aimed at an older readership, the setting, place, and time are of greater significance (cf. 335).

Staiger (2014) adds that the depiction of backgrounds and surroundings can be more or less explicit, depending on their relevance for the story and character development (cf. 15). The focus of the story at hand is rather on the protagonist than on the surroundings. Hence, the
illustrations of the background and Jerome’s surroundings are very minimalistic. We only see what is important to the story. Jerome is shown inside unidentified rooms without background (with exception from page 23-24 where we see shelves with books and little baskets with collected words in them behind Jerome) and some places outside. Reynolds usually signals Jerome being outside only by a short green line or a green spot signifying grass.

On the double-spread pages 25-26, 27-28, and 31-32 the illustrator presents Jerome in a still minimalistic but fully colored outside setting on a hill, with the sky in the background.

Characters

The protagonist in *The Word Collector* is Jerome. The text first mentions Jerome on page two but does not hint at his age. Judging from the illustrations (and the cover) he seems to be a young boy.

Staiger (2014) mentions that characters in picturebooks are determined by their physical appearance, their clothes, as well as their facial expressions (cf. 16). Facial expressions are also indicators of emotions. Together with the way a character acts and his or her body is postured, facial expressions allow readers, even the younger ones, to make inferences about a character (cf. Prior, Willson, and Martinez 2012, 202). Throughout the book Jerome looks happy, interested, and content (especially on page eight). On page 14 his facial expression changes to surprise and fright, when he slips and drops his collection. Page 16 shows him thoughtful and reflecting on the new word combinations in front of him. On page 22 Jerome’s facial expression mirrors worry and regret, as he tries to apologize to another person. Determination can be the emotion associated on page 26, when he pulls the wagon up the hill.

Jerome wears the same clothes throughout the book. His three-quarter pants are purple and his matching sweater has white and lighter purple stripes on it. Interestingly, Jerome does not wear shoes. This could be an expression of his carefree nature and his young age. In fact, none
of the children portrayed in the book wear shoes. I do not necessarily think that not wearing shoes indicates poverty, as the rest of his clothes look neat and Jerome is pictured with many books and at one point in front of large shelves (on the double-spread of page 23-24). Jerome’s darker skin color and almost purple hair is not addressed. He is a representative of our multicultural society, but as this topic is not part of the narrative, it is presented to be a given. There is no background story for the character other than the description of his hobby and how he practices collecting words, from where he finds them to what he does with them.

Even though the story is short, there is some character development. At the beginning, Jerome collects words because he likes them or they sound interesting. Then, by accident he stumbles and the words are mixed, which leads him to start experimenting with his collected words. He explores new options and gets creative. He realizes the power of words and being able to share your thoughts and feelings with the world. That is when he decides to give his words away. He sacrifices his carefully collected words to provide others with the opportunity to explore them and be able to express themselves. In return, he is very happy and unable to express this happiness, not only because he has no words left, but also because the feeling is overwhelming. He learns, experiments, grows, and develops as a character.

Apart from Jerome there are no other main characters. At the beginning, people are mentioned and pictured but they remain nameless. They are shown collecting things indoors and outdoors. They appear to be diverse, female and male, thin and not so thin, of fair and darker skin color. It is not clear from the text or the pictures where the characters are from, but due to the diversity they might be from different parts of the world or a multicultural community, as most communities are nowadays. There are also people who interact with Jerome, but they remain undetermined as well. However, all of the people are illustrated with much detail and assets that contribute to their individuality, such as glasses, hats, scarfs, different hair colors, and different hair styles.

**Narrative**

The point of view from which the story is told is omniscient. The narrator knows what Jerome is feeling and what other people feel, as for example on page 20, when we are told that Jerome’s songs moved and delighted other people. Past simple is the time in which the story is narrated.
There is no dialogue in the text. The illustrations on pages four, nine, 21, and 22 add speech bubbles, a graphic device known from comics, with just one word or sentence. Hence, they add some direct speech but are not real dialogues.

**Mood**

The mood of the book appears to be positive. There are some serene moments, as for example on the double spread of pages 21-22, about the power of words and phrases. Vivid colors are often used to support a lively mood (cf. Martinez and Harmon 2012, 336), which is also the case in *The Word Collector*.

**4.1.2 Verbal Dimension**

As far as the language and style of the text is concerned, it is important to have a look at the length and complexity of the language. One characteristic of the picturebook format is its brevity. Therefore, the text in general as well as the sentences are short. The overall language and sentence structure is also quite simple, but the words are chosen carefully. As they usually are in picturebooks.

Regarding parts of speech Reynolds uses various nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns, prepositions, and conjunctions (and, but, etc.). It is part of the story that Jerome collects different kinds of words, which includes short, two-syllable, and multi-syllable words. Examples for these kinds of words are added and presented in the images.

Most of the sentences are simple sentences with short independent clauses. Nonetheless, there are also compound sentences (page nine) and complex sentences (page 15). Most sentences are statements. Yet, there is one rhetorical question on page two.

It can be deduced from the summary in chapter 4.1.1 that the plot follows a linear structure without flashbacks. Based on the concept of “the eight-point arc” by Watts (2010, 28) it can be stated that the plot offers the “base reality of the tale” (ibid), the first phase of the plot which serves as an exposition and introduction of the topic and the protagonist. We learn about the kind of words Jerome liked to collect and why. The conflict, Jerome’s accidental fall on the double spread on page 13-14 (almost in the middle of the book), can be seen as the trigger that leads to change. It is a kind of turning point as Jerome starts to explore new and unsuspected possibilities and starts his personal quest. He rearranges his collected words and creates poems and songs. Additionally, Jerome reflects on the power of his words. Due to the brevity of the text, the fourth phase, surprise, the fifth, critical choice, the sixth, climax, and the seventh, reversal, cannot be distinctly determined. All of those phases intertwine when Jerome decides
to climb a hill with his collection on a wagon and lets the words soar down. He watches the children grabbing the words and in the eighth phase, the resolution, is unable to share his happiness but has developed and has changed as a character. He is wiser and happier.

**Style**

According to Ur (2012) cohesive devices that may be found in texts are: “repetition, […], conjunctions such as *and, but, yet, because, although, if, […]*, pronouns or possessives with antecedents such as *the one, she, their*” (39). The picturebook text at hand is rather short and simple. Therefore, there are not a lot of cohesive or stylistic devices. Nonetheless, the text offers variations of repetition (page one and two “Some people collect…”, page four and six “He collected words he….”, page nine and ten “There were words…”, etc.), alliteration (page four “My trip to Peru was perfectly pleasant”), as well as a rhetorical question (page two), and a simile (page eight). Once again it has to be highlighted that the shortness of the format makes it less intimidating for students to go through and analyze the text. They might be more eager to try to identify stylistic devices in a short text as it also takes less time and maybe even effort. Additionally, once they are able to fulfill the task and identify the stylistic devices, they should be able to apply that skill on longer and more complex texts. Ideally, they are also able to use what they have learned for their own writing.

Adjectives are used precisely, for example, to describe which kind of words Jerome liked to collect, such as “short and sweet” (page seven), “big”, “little”, “sad”, and “dreamy” (page 16).

Language learners usually tend to start their sentence with the same beginnings. This is not only true for foreign language learners but also L1 students, which is why several experts supply materials and highlight the importance of training students’ skill to establish sentence fluency and vary their sentence beginnings (cf. Writing Fix 2015).

Thus, it is also informative to have a look at the different sentence beginnings in Reynolds’ book. Telling students to have a look at the way authors start their sentences might be revealing and inspiring. On 14 pages Reynolds uses the protagonist’s name or the personal pronoun “he” to start the sentence. Through this he is able to concentrate the attention on the main person and what he is doing. At times, the focus is on the words Jerome collects. Reynolds consciously uses repetitive patterns throughout his texts and especially with his sentence beginnings. As a result, the text becomes more rhythmical and catchy, even resembling a poem. This is typical for picturebooks, whose authors often use rhyme to enhance this effect. One sentence on page 26 stands out. It starts with “One breezy afternoon, Jerome …”. This is the first time that Reynolds presents a description of time. Furthermore, it reminds its reader of a typical narrative
beginning and phrases that are used in telling tales. This change in style could be explained by
the importance of this sentence, as it marks the beginning of the climax, the moment Jerome is
about to give away his words.

The benefit L1 students and language learners can have from examining a mentor text has
been highlighted throughout this thesis at various times and is also stressed in the following
quote by Ur, who is convinced that “[d]rawing students’ attention to how a good text is carefully
structured with a beginning, middle and end can help when they come to write their own
compositions, or prepare oral presentations” (Ur 2012, 38).

**Level of vocabulary**

The difficulty of vocabulary is to be taken seriously in regard to written text in the EFL
classroom. Hence, part of analyzing the verbal dimension is looking at the level of vocabulary
according to the results on the website “English Vocabulary Profile, which covers all six levels
of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)” (English Vocabulary Profile
2018). The following table presents exemplary lexis (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs,
prepositions and phrases) from *The Word Collector*. The terms and phrases are taken from the
text as well as the illustrations (written in italics) and assigned to their CEFR level in the table
according to the results found in the database.

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| **NOUNS**
word, page, world, afternoon, wind | **NOUNS**
stamp, song, art, trip, dream, sound, science, star, hill | **NOUNS**
collection, coin, rock, bug, poem, attention, meaning, peace, breeze, valley | **NOUNS**
collectors, treasure, potential, harmony, action, | **NOUNS**
treat, spark, |
| **VERBS**
to see, to hear, to read, to know, to say, to use, to write, to make, to think, to feel, to have | **VERBS**
to collect, to fill, to grow, to fly, to pick up, to dream, to climb, to pull, to describe | **VERBS**
to wonder, to sound like, to slip, to notice, to imagine, to smile, to understand (feelings), to share (feelings) | **VERBS**
to whisper, to organize, to move (feeling), to delight | **VERBS**
to be suited to | **VERBS**
to drift |
| **ADJECTIVES**
short, sweet, big, little, sad, favorite, happy | **ADJECTIVES**
pleasant, wonderful, brilliant, electric, high | **ADJECTIVES**
certain, marvelous | **ADJECTIVES**
violent, powerful (effect), packed with | **ADJECTIVES**
torrential, poetic, |
| **ADVERBS**
clearly | **ADVERBS**
perfectly | **ADVERBS**
eagerly | | |
| **PREPOSITIONS**
In, into, below | **PREPOSITIONS**
next to | | | | **PHRASES**
to catch sb’s attention, |
Not to be found in the database are the terms: *willow, emerald, sth. jumps out at sb.*, *to pop off the page, bloom, candid, hover, glimmer, motif, kaleidoscope, guacamole, geometry, symphony, aromatic, vociferous, effervescent, molasses, smudge, bellow, scrapbook, azure, blissful, lore, dreamy, jumble, to string together, savor, cascading, breezy, wagon, to empty, to scurry.*

Judging from the table the majority of lexis used in the text is ranging from A1 to B2. Especially a lot of verbs and adjectives used in the text are A1 and A2 and thus, easy to understand not only for young L1 readers but also for EFL students. Noticeably, the majority of words presented as part of Jerome’s collection in the illustrations can be associated with a higher level or are not present in the database at all. This seems reasonable as the premise of the book is to collect interesting and therefore, often complex and difficult words.

When working with lower secondary students not all difficult words have to be addressed specifically. Nonetheless, if students’ curiosity is sparked it can be included in an activity to determine interesting but unknown words.

In general, the whole book is about words and language, which makes it an excellent starting point for discussions from a linguistic as well as philosophical point of view.

### 4.1.3 Visual Dimension

When examining the visual dimension of *The Word Collector* I will focus on the following aspects: motion, colors, space, positions, and typography.

**Motion**

Throughout the book only little motion is illustrated. Jerome is usually standing, sitting, or laying. Be that as it may, on page twelve Jerome is shown running while carrying his scrapbooks. The motion is depicted by the position of his feet being in the air and being surrounded by “motion lines” (McCloud 1994, 110), a typical graphic device used in the comic world to signal movement. The following double spread displays Jerome’s fall. Again, there are little green dots surrounding Jerome’s feet and indicating motion.
More instances where we see visuals indicating motion are for example dots behind a flying bee on page two, or motion lines on top of a moving pencil on page six, a moving baton on page eight, a drop of water dripping from a watering can and motion lines indicating a dog wagging his tail on page 22. On the double spread of pages 25-26 the breeze mentioned in the text is represented by fallen leaves surrounding Jerome and his wagon. Furthermore, the act of pulling the wagon is supported by motion lines at the back of the wagon and over Jerome’s shoulder. Lastly, the final two double spreads illustrate the breeze through the paper snippets in the air.

The direction of motion is usually from left to right. Even though images are read differently than written texts (this has already been mentioned in this thesis) this direction supports the western flow of reading, that progresses from left page to right page.

**Colors and space**

The Colors, not only in typography but in general, are another aspect that are worth taking into consideration in order to ‘get the whole picture’ and discuss tone and mood and deeper meanings. Throughout the picturebook Reynolds uses vivid and bright colors. This creates a positive mood from first to last page. All shapes, objects, and people are surrounded by black contour-lines.

The backgrounds are varied. On twelve pages there is no background coloring or images hinting at surroundings. Thus, we see Jerome or other people on a white page. The only thing included is a line or green area, to make clear whether Jerome is inside a building or outside on the grass. On pages five, seven, and nine the negative space clearly dominates. Thus, the background is white but the scene (Jerome or some action) is surrounded by a round colored area. Furthermore, there are light pastel backgrounds (page 6, 11, 20, 23/24, 27/28, 29/30, and
and also some in more vibrant colors (page 8, 10, 15/16, and 25/26). On the double spread of page 15/16 the whole background is of a vibrant dark yellow.

![Figure 6: The Word Collector (Reynolds 2018, 15-16)](image)

This background, which fits the story perfectly, is striking as this is the moment that Jerome notices new possibilities of combining his collected words after his fall. In addition, after Jerome realizes the empowerment resulting from the ability to express oneself and the impact words can have, he decides to share his words. The illustrations that demonstrate that development on the last ten pages cover the whole pages and are overall more colorful than in the beginning.

On the last pages, the changing colors of the sky in the background also signal time. For example, in the end when Jerome pulls the wagon with his word collections on top of the hill, the first double spread shows him in front of a blue sky. When he throws the words out, the sky is purple. Hence, some time must have passed. The sun went down, coloring the sky accordingly.

The space displayed in *The Word Collector* is more one-dimensional than three-dimensional. There is very little perspective and a lot of negative space with many empty backgrounds.

Reynolds usually puts Jerome in the foreground and the middle of the page. The size of the character depends on the number of scenes displayed on one page and the positioning of the text. The only time Jerome is drawn across a double spread is on page 15-16, when he notices his jumbled words and reflects on it. Usually, Jerome’s whole body is depicted in the scenes. Exceptions from that are when he sits (pages six, nine, and 24) or on page seven where we see two scenes with only Jerome’s hands writing and sticking words in his scrapbook. The way Reynolds emphasizes Jerome highlights his importance and keeps the focus on him and his actions.
In regard to page turns it has already been noted that they are used to spark curiosity, enhance suspense, and separate scenes (cf. Staiger 2014, 19). One example for a good page turn would be page twelve. The image of Jerome walking with a very high pile of books encourages predictions of what is going to happen next. The pile is so high that an accident or a fall seems likely. Furthermore, curiosity and suspense is reinforced on the textual level by a hyphen disrupting the sentence.

At the beginning, most of the single pages present isolated scenes. The double spread of page 12-13 illustrating Jerome’s fall is the first of three double spreads filled with only one scene. The final pages (23-24, 25-26, 27-28, 29-30, 31-32) also present only one scene on the whole double spread. This slows the narration down and provides time for the reader to process and really focus on what is happening.

**Style**

Peter H. Reynolds uses different kinds of techniques and media on paper and also digitally. (cf. Reynolds 2011). The art in The Word Collector seems to be a combination of watercolors or gouache and pen. Yet, it could also be a digital illustration. His style is neither photorealistic nor abstract. The portrayal of his characters is cute and simplified. Reynolds’ style is distinctive. Yet, he follows similar principles as other picturebook illustrators. Asked about his style in an interview Reynolds explained: “I subscribe to the "less is more" philosophy. Only the lines needed to convey the essence of the story are needed” (Lee 2012).

**Typography**

As far as typography is concerned, Reynolds uses a font that resembles handwriting. The impression this creates is one of familiarity and ease. It does not look too rigorous and fits the energy and style of the illustrations. The text alignment is centered.

Throughout the text the author/illustrator uses black or white writing. However, on page four he colors “Peru” in red, to set it off from the other words on the page. Peru is the word that Jerome likes and collects. This can also be seen on the next two pages, where Jerome collects the words “willow” in blue and “emerald” in green.

As with the color, the size of single words illustrates their importance and demonstrates emphasis. This is very apparent on page 21, where the adjective “powerful” is a lot bigger compared to others.

Reynolds also writes some words (HE on page two, PERU on page four. WILLOW on page 5, EMERALD on page six, DREAMY/SCIENCE/ACTION/POETIC on page twelve) or whole...
sentences (on page four) in all capitals. As a result, as with color and size, using all capital letters draws attention to particular words and sentences.

The great variety of designs and colors keeps the story of the book full of unexpected development and interesting. And of course, the choices are not arbitrary, which makes the purpose of the design decisions and their effects an excellent point of discussion with students.

4.1.4 Intermodal Dimension

As far as the relationship between text and images in The Word Collector is concerned, more than one type is established, which according to Staiger (2014) is not unusual for picturebooks (cf. 20). At times, the relationship is symmetrical and text and illustrations contain the same information, as for example on page eleven. There are also instances when text and images share a complementary or enhancing relationship. For example, on page 21-22 where the short statement about the power of simple words is illustrated through four different scenes showing situations in which Jerome uses simple but effective phrases. The illustrations show more details and add depth to the simple and brief text.

It is interesting to mention that the illustrations not only enhance the text but add a level of intertextuality to the story. On page six the text says: “He collected words he read” (Reynolds 2018). The illustration adds meaning and intertextuality by presenting Jerome reading the book Wizard of Oz and writing down emerald. People who know the story will know that Dorothy travels to the Emerald City to see the Wizard of Oz. And the book Jerome is holding is also emerald green. The book title, the color of the book, and the word Jerome collects are three intertextual references to the story and world of Oz.

Another scene that stands out is the one on the double spread of pages 27-28. The text mentions Jerome’s smile. However, the illustration does not show it. Instead, Jerome and the wagon are illustrated as black silhouettes. By not showing the smile, Reynolds prevents redundancy in text and image.

Figure 7: The Word Collector (Reynolds 2018, 27-28)
4.1.5 Paratextual Dimension

*The Word Collector* is a square hardcover picturebook with 40 pages. It has a colored flap copy which displays an illustration of a young boy (the main character Jerome, as the reader learns later on) with his eyes closed, his arms in the air, a smile on his face, and yellow snippets of paper with words written on them surrounding him. The boy’s facial expressions signify content and happiness, as well as inspiration possibly. Further, surrounding Jerome are little dots in red, orange, pink, and beige. Those dots add an artistic and creative notion to the book. Furthermore, there is the title of the book, the author’s name, as well as the titles of two of the author’s previous successful books.

![The Word Collector Cover](image)

Figure 8: *The Word Collector* Cover (Reynolds 2018)

The quote from the inside flap reads: “Some people collect stamps. Some people collect coins. Some people collect art. And Jerome? Jerome collected words…” (Reynolds 2018). This text is a quick introduction to the story and also repeated on the first pages.

Once the flap is removed the illustrations on the protective covers surface and display a vast collection of yellow snippets with words written in black on them.

Regarding the front matter, there are front endpapers, a verso and a title page. The double spread front endpapers present an illustration of a light blue sky, white clouds, a blue bird, and snippets with words floating through the air. On the verso page of the title page information regarding publishing and copyright as well as a dedication from the author and illustrator Peter H. Reynolds can be found. The title page displays the title, author, and publisher. The text on both pages is surrounded by yellow word snippets. Furthermore, on the verso page Reynolds also places a pencil, probably as a means of foreshadowing the story.
The back endpaper double spread maintains the pink and purple coloring of the last story pages and adds white stars to the evening sky. The flying words are no longer random collected words but a message from the author. It says: “Reach for your own words. Tell the world who you are and how you will make it better. –Peter Hamilton Reynolds. The Beginning.” (Reynolds 2018). With this message Reynolds directly addresses his readership and encourages them to be like Jerome. He urges his readers to collect words in order to be able to share opinions, thoughts, and feelings with the world and most importantly make it a better place. I almost missed the final words “The Beginning” on the recto page. It is the exact opposite of what readers might expect at the end of a fictional story, which would be the typical “The End”. It could be reasoned that Reynolds chose this wording, because his book is not the end. If children/students find their own words to share their opinions and feelings with the world, it is in fact a beginning. Thus, the author/illustrator chose an incredibly inspiring way to end his story and engage readers as well as language learners.

4.2 Learning Potential and Challenges

In general, this book offers various possibilities to expand students’ vocabulary, foster discussions about language, how words are developed, as well as the meaning of words. As such, this book can not only be used for language activities but also for philosophical discussions about the development and power of language. What kind of activities could be combined with The Word Collector will be explored in the next subchapter.

In regard to challenges, there are three major aspects to be considered, the simplicity of the illustrations, the length of the text, and the level of difficulty of some of the words presented.

First, older students might be reluctant to work with a picturebook such as The Word Collector initially, because of the fact that it is a picturebook and because of their prejudices and their first impressions of the book. The illustrations are quite simple, minimalistic and colorful. Such an observation might lead to concerns about suitability. Older students might feel that this picturebook specifically is too childish for them and not worth their time. Additionally, the protagonist is quite young. Thus, from the aspect of identification, it may be better suited for the lower secondary EFL classroom. Furthermore, taking the findings of Martinez and Harmon (2012, 323-343) into consideration it seems as if The Word Collector exhibits similar features as their exemplary books for younger readers. Pictures and text work together to develop the plot. The characters, their appearances, and emotions are developed through pictures primarily. Moreover, the setting is also almost exclusively provided by the
illustrations, even though it is not very detailed. All these factors might lead to the argumentation that this book is only suited for a younger readership and hence, younger students. Nonetheless, depending on the complexity of activities and depth of discussions there is potential for the upper secondary level as well. It is all about differentiation and scaffolding. In fact, older students might enjoy remembering their past, and reflecting upon their childhood collections. They might even have a younger sibling and be able to witness their fascination of collecting things and playing with language. Or, last but not least, they might enjoy examining the power of words and being creative with language themselves.

Second, the length of the text in this picturebook might be of concern. The text indeed is rather short. This might, at first, not seem to be interesting to older students. Still, the story has much more depth than some students might think. Also, language wise the first impression of this book might seem to be that it does not hold a lot of potential. However, as the analysis in the previous subchapter already has shown and the possible activities in the next subchapter will show, there is potential with this book. Besides, the book will probably be used supplementary to a textbook and various other materials and not all of the aspects mentioned in this thesis have to or should be analyzed and discussed with students in absolute detail.

Third, there are numerous challenging words displayed in the book. Probably, various words presented are difficult and unknown, especially to L2 learners. Yet, they do not have to be known. It is part of the story that the protagonist collects interesting and challenging words. Students can decide which words they want to look up. In fact, it could be part of an activity to do some research on at least 3 words and present them to the class. To avoid students choosing the same words, the teacher could present a list and let each student choose three words from that list.

4.3 Exemplary Activities

When Scrivener (2011) writes about integrating different books into the lesson and teaching around those books, he differentiates between activities that “pick up themes, characters and language from the book” (323). The following activities as well as the activities for the second book will also refer to themes, characters, organization, style and language.

The following collection is divided into pre-reading activities, the reading itself, and post-reading activities. The purpose of these activities is to further language learning and engage students. The purpose of this collection is to present different possible activities that could be integrated in the EFL lesson in combination with reading The Word Collector. Which activities
a teacher might want to choose obviously depends on the purpose of his/her lesson and the topic he/she wants to focus on.

4.3.1 Pre-Reading Activities

In order to understand a text, students have to be familiar with the words and meanings presented. This is why it is often advisable to include pre-reading vocabulary activities, such as pre-teaching of vocabulary or word lists/glossaries. However, for simpler texts such activities may not be necessary. Students could guess new words based on the context or ask their teachers for explanations later on (cf. Ur 2012, 31).

The vocabulary displayed in the text of The Word Collector is generally rather simple and easy to understand. The words added in the illustrations, though, are more difficult and it can be part of a post-reading activity to research their meaning.

In order to motivate students and raise their curiosity, Ur (2012) suggests asking them various questions and involving them in discussions. Additionally, she recommends making predictions and guesses about the content based on titles and pictures. Students could also write down questions which they should be able to answer after they read the text (cf. 31).

The following reading activity is based on Ur’s suggestions to arouse students’ curiosity and increase their motivation to engage with the picturebook.

**GUESSING THE COVER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Level:</strong></th>
<th>Lower and upper secondary level, Grades 5-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time:</strong></td>
<td>approximately 10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose/Aims:</strong></td>
<td>Students predict the story by looking at the cover and get hooked and motivated to explore what really happens. They discuss possible plot suggestions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Materials:** | Cover of the picturebook (without the title)  
Paper and pens  
Board and chalk/pens |
| **Description:** | Step 1: The teacher presents the cover (without the title) to the class and asks: What do you think this book could be about? What could be a possible title?  
Step 2: Students look at the cover, get together in pairs, and discuss possible storylines and titles. |
Step 3: Three to five volunteers present their ideas.

Step 4: The teacher writes the title on the board and asks: What new ideas do you have, now that you see the cover and know the title?

Step 5: Students share their thoughts.

**Challenges:**

Based on the cover, older students might disregard the picturebook as being too childish. However, the title clearly gives students an idea about the story and with support by the teacher, students might get interested in the story.

**EXTENSIONS AND VARIATIONS**

**FINDING A TITLE**

Students could only look at the illustration and imagine a fitting title.

**PREDICTING VOCABULARY**

Students could look at the title and the illustration and predict which words they might find in the book (cf. Scrivener 2011, 268). Students could predict and produce a word list together or choose words from a list provided by the teacher. This activity helps them predict what the story might be about and what might happen.

**DISCUSSION: What kind of words would you collect?**

Students could discuss what words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, compounds, simple or melodic words, etc.) they would collect. Or they could try to predict, which words are collected in the book. The teacher could point at the difference between monosyllabic, two-syllable, and multi-syllable words, words that sound musical, words that sound like the thing they describe, and lexical as well as semantic relations.

**4.3.2 Reading Activities**

Generally, I would suggest that the teacher reads the picturebook aloud to the whole class, as this strategy offers three major benefits. First, it does not take a lot of time (probably only 3-5 minutes). Second, the teacher can make the reading interactive by including questions about the text and letting students actively predict what might happen next. Third, the teacher can model how to make predictions, infer meaning, pronounce certain terms and use prosody effectively. Thus, through reading aloud students can train their listening skills and also speaking skills, if they are involved in predicting, guessing, and discussing.
Of course, students could also read the picturebook independently. This, however, might be difficult with only one copy of the text. Therefore, the teacher might have to supply more than one copy of the text or form groups and have each group read another picturebook with a similar topic. In addition, for independent silent reading the teacher might want to provide worksheets with questions not only as a post-reading activity but also during the reading process to foster predicting and increase curiosity and motivation. Ur (2012) proposes tasks similar to “‘Read to the end of the page. What do you think the next few words are likely to be, more or less?’” (145). Reading to the end of the page and predicting what happens next, works especially well with picturebooks as there is usually suspense and a kind of cliffhanger from one double spread to the next.

4.3.3 Post-Reading Activities

Ur (2012) explains that “the listening provides only the first stage in an extended activity involving reading, writing or speaking” (109). After the pre-reading activities and the reading itself, teachers can choose from a variety of post-reading activities. One of the first things they might automatically do is to ask general questions, such as how the students liked the text, what their initial reactions and thoughts are and if they would want to share any thoughts and ideas with the class.

Second, teachers may want to include two or three activities depending on the aim of their lesson and the reasons for choosing this particular picturebook. The following collection of post-reading activities includes aspects like organization, language/style, topics/themes, and content of the picturebook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERSTANDING STORY STRUCTURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level:</strong> Lower and upper secondary level, Grades 5-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time:</strong> about 15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose/Aims:</strong> Students understand the structure of the story and are able to pinpoint the main aspects and events in a few words. They practice how to summarize a narrative text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materials:</strong> Copies of the story-pyramid worksheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies of the book</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description:**

Step 1: The teacher explains the concept of the story pyramid and its purpose.
Step 2: The students try to create a story pyramid for the book in pairs or in groups (whatever fits the class dynamics best) while the teacher monitors the class and is available to support and answer questions or foster ideas.

Step 3: The students compare their results in class.

The story pyramid\(^6\) can be seen as a visualization of how a story is structured. It is a graphic organizer that can help learners to determine main aspects in a narration and summarize the story. It is called a pyramid because of its form. The first sentence starts with one word, the second with two and so on and so forth (cf. Carnevale, study.com 2003-2018). Using a story pyramid with an easy text such as a picturebook can not only be fun, but also a preparation for more complex texts. Once students know how to apply the strategy thanks to easier texts, they are prepared for longer and more difficult ones. The following figure shows the instructions and an example story pyramid.

![Example story pyramid](https://www.teachervision.com/story-pyramid)

**Figure 9:** Story Pyramid (Source: https://www.teachervision.com/story-pyramid)

**Challenges:**

First of all, students have to understand the purpose of the activity and the instructions. If they work on a pyramid in groups, they have to collaborate and discuss which words would be the best choice. This is a challenge but also a good practice for word choice. Another challenge is the fact that students need to have their own copy of the text. Depending on the number of students, at least one book for every group would be recommended. If the parents are not willing to buy the book, the teacher could get copies from the library or use videos of readings of the book on YouTube\(^7\).

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\(^6\) For more information and examples see: https://www.teachervision.com/story-pyramid and https://study.com/academy/lesson/story-pyramid-strategy-example.html

\(^7\) For an example reading see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmqTgDoWOC8
EXTENSIONS AND VARIATIONS

Based on the story pyramid, students could write a summary of the story. Of course, the picturebook text is very brief, but this activity, as mentioned above, can still be used to practice writing skills and also be adapted for longer texts.

IDENTIFYING STYLISTIC AND NARRATIVE DEVICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level:</th>
<th>Lower and upper secondary level, Grades 5-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose/Aims:</td>
<td>Students are able to identify stylistic and narrative devices, such as literary or cohesive devices as well as adjectives, in the text, understand the effect of their use and are able to imitate and use them in their own writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>A worksheet for students to fill in the examples of cohesive and literary devices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Description:

Step 1: The teacher explains that students should reread the text and identify cohesive and literary devices. (Depending on the class, it would be advisable to recapitulate what those devices are)

Step 2: Students analyze the text and find examples. This work could be done individually or in pairs.

Step 3: The teacher discusses the findings in class.

Challenges:

With the brevity of the text comes a limited number of stylistic devices. Yet, as already mentioned before, the brevity might make the activity less intimidating and more fun.

As for the previous activity students probably need their own copy of the picturebook in order to analyze the text in detail.

EXTENSIONS AND VARIATIONS

Add more stylistic devices to the text

In addition to the analysis, students could add more stylistic devices (cohesive or literary devices or adjectives) to the text and discuss the effects of their alterations. The idea of extending the text by adding certain words is also mentioned by Ur (2012, 39).
COLLECTING WORDS FROM FAVORITE BOOKS/TEXTS

Level: Lower and upper secondary level, Grades 5-11

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose/Aims: Students are able to analyze words, distinguish their grammatical and linguistic features and connect them to their personal life. After they have practiced their oral skills by presenting their picks, they should choose one creative activity to tighten what they have learned and foster their creativity.

Materials: Books and other texts
Paper and pens or whatever material students need to be creative

Description:

Step 1: Students are supposed to collect unusual and interesting words at home (from their favorite novels or newspapers or online articles), look up their meaning, and bring them to school for the next lesson or the next week. This can be decided by the teacher. The teacher should collect words as well, first, to participate in the next lesson and second, to be able to provide spare words, in case a student forgets his or her words.

Step 2: Students can be divided into groups of four and present their words. They should explain: 1. Why they chose the words.
2. What the words mean.
3. What grammatical features the words have (parts of speech, syllables, etc.).
4. What the words mean to the student personally. Any feelings or thoughts or associations related to them.

Step 3: Each group chooses four words that are special to them and present them to the rest of the class. Again, they should explain:
1. Why they chose the words. How they came to the decision.
2. What the words mean.
3. What grammatical features the words have.
4. What the words mean to the group (feelings, thoughts, associations)

Step 4: As in The Word Collector, students can choose a creative task and decide what they want to do with their collected words. They could for example, write poems or songs, draw or compose something or perform a dramatic scene.
Challenges:
A challenge could be the groups not working well together or a student not finding any words he or she likes. In that case the teacher can provide good examples.

### COLLECTING WORDS THAT REPRESENT FAVORITE BOOKS/TEXTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level:</th>
<th>Lower and upper secondary level, Grades 5-9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>about 10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose/Aims:</td>
<td>This activity is based on the intertextuality found on page 6 in the book. Students should go back to what they have read (favorite books, classics, fairytales), find words that stand for the books, and be able to guess the book by the word. They should reflect on their reading and practice word choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>Books (such as classics, fairytales, youth novels, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description:**

**Step 1:** The teacher asks students to collect words that are significant or typical for three well-known books/texts they have read and their colleagues would know too.
This could be done in class, if the materials are present, or at home with more time to do research and prepare.

**Step 2:** Students collect three words that are significant or typical for well-known books they have read and their colleagues would know too. The teacher monitors the class.

**Step 3:** The students share their words and others guess which books they represent. This could be done in groups.

**Challenges:**
This activity needs some preparation time for students. They need to find suitable books, find good and strong words, and bring their words to class in the next lesson.

### CREATING NEW WORDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level:</th>
<th>Lower and upper secondary level, Grades 5-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>about 10-15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose/Aims:</td>
<td>This activity is inspired by the content of the book and the idea of collecting words, combining them, creating new words and playing with language. Students create new words in order to be creative with language. This enhances their language awareness and provides fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>Paper and pens Dictionaries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Description:**

Step 1: The teacher gives instructions.

Step 2: Students search through dictionaries or other sources to find interesting words (adjectives and nouns). Maybe they like the meaning of the sound or another aspect about the word. They try to find 3 new combinations.

Step 3: Once students have created new word combinations, they should be motivated for a creative activity that uses another genre, poetry, to think about the words on a deeper more philosophical level, five sense poetry. This strategy can be a lot of fun, when learners write poems about their made-up words. However, five sense poetry can also be used for unknown words from the text (if they sound interesting to learners) or abstract concepts in general. The idea is to take an abstract noun or term and write a poem with descriptions of the word including all senses. Thus, describing what it looks, tastes, feels, sounds, and smells like.

**Challenges:**

Some students could feel uninspired or have troubles coming up with creative words or word combinations themselves. Compliant with the principles of scaffolding, the teacher might want to supply a list with interesting words that can be chosen by students.

**EXTENSIONS AND VARIATIONS**

**Variation 1:**

If students do not like creative writing and refuse to attempt writing a poem, they could just search for words they like and find a definition of the word. Furthermore, they should be able to explain why they chose their words. Then they combine them to find 3 new combinations and describe what they think their combinations describe or could be about.

**Variation 2:**

Another variation to help with creativity and overcome writers block could be a list of interesting adjectives and nouns supplied by the teacher. Students can choose words from the list, combine them, and progress with further activities.

**Variation 3:**

The students could also come up with their own nonsense-words that do not exist, yet. This variation is very creative and fun. However, it has to be ensured that the activity has a purpose and is not to be ridiculed completely.

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8 For a detailed description see for example Susan Weaver Jones blog post on the Hameray Classroom Literacy Blog: https://www.hameraypublishing.com/blogs/all/five-senses-poems-expanding-students-writing
DISCUSSION: The power of words

Level: Lower and upper secondary level, Grades 5-12
Time: about 30 minutes
Purpose/Aims: This activity is aimed at fostering critical thinking as well as raising and discussing philosophical questions. Students are practicing their speaking skills as well as being able to take different roles in a discussion and find/present arguments accordingly. They are also encouraged to be creative with the language and more involved in discussions.

Materials: Four thinking hats in different colors
Role cards
Copies with questions

Description:
The idea of the four thinking hats is adapted from Bilsborough’s lesson plan (2015a) on the Teaching English website who adapted Edward de Bono’s idea of six discussion hats.

Step 1: The teacher explains the procedure for the discussion about the power of words and divides students into four groups (black, yellow, red, and white).

Step 2: Students read their respective role cards and make sure they understand all the words. The black hat is the always questioning devil’s advocate. The yellow hat represents a very optimistic position. The red hat focuses on feelings and can be a bit over the top. The role includes sharing everything, strong emotions, dislikes, as well as fears. The white hat is the one that relies on facts.

Step 3: Each color group gets together and discusses their role and possible arguments for the discussion.

Step 4: After five to ten minutes of discussion time, students are regrouped. This time every group has one person with a hat of each color. The groups discuss the topic, as well as questions provided by the teacher.

Step 5: Reflection in the class, summary of the most important aspects/arguments, and feedback on the discussions.

Example role cards can be found at: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/four_hats_role_cards.pdf
Challenges:
Learners might have difficulties adapting to their role and finding arguments. Therefore, the teacher could give them time to do some research on the topic at home and have the discussions in the next lesson. It might be difficult for students to distinguish between and follow their assigned roles. This is why for this purpose rather than de Bono’s six hats Bilsborough’s four hats were chosen.

EXTENSIONS AND VARIATIONS
Ur (2012) advises to appoint discussion leaders to each group to manage time and involvement. Moreover, it could be beneficial to have another student monitoring the L1 use in each group, if there is a strong L1 affinity in the respective class (cf. 119).

Variation 1:
If the students struggle too much with the method but are willing to discuss the topic, the hats could be neglected and the discussion could be more open, spontaneous, and personal.

REFLECTING ON PERSONAL COLLECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level:</th>
<th>Lower and upper secondary level, Grades 5-9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>about 10-15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose/Aims:</td>
<td>This activity is based on the content and topic of the book. Students should practice speaking, tenses (present, past, and future), and connect the book to their personal life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>Paper and pens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 1: The teacher asks students to answer three questions:
1. What did you collect in the past? (For example, as a small child)
2. What do you collect now?
3. What will you collect in the future?

Step 2: Students think about the questions individually and write them down. They can be creative and add drawings.

Step 3: Students share their texts about their personal collections with a partner. The partner takes notes.

Step 4: Every student writes a text about their colleagues’ collections and hands it in. This step could also be homework.
Challenges:
It is important to have a respectful atmosphere in order for students to not be afraid or ashamed to share their personal stories. Some students might not be willing to share what they collected when they were younger or what they collect now. In this case, the teacher could start by talking about her/his collections and maybe break the ice.

EXTENSIONS AND VARIATIONS
Variation 1: Class-collection-history book
After students had time to think about their past and future collections, they could share and discuss their ideas with a partner or in groups. Then, they could write a text about it at home and bring it to class for the next lesson or week. In class, teachers could use the texts for practicing peer feedback. After students have gotten feedback and edited their texts at home, they could design a special layout for their collection history. The teacher could then take all copies and combine them into a class-collection-history book.

Variation 2: Short presentation/speaking activity
Students could bring something that is left of their collection (stamps, rocks, cards, etc.) to class the next time and present it in front of the class.

ANALYZING TEXT-PICTURE RELATIONSHIPS
Level: Lower and upper secondary level, Grades 5-11
Time: about 20 minutes
Purpose/Aims: This activity is supposed to support critical thinking and visual literacy. Students should analyze the various components of the picturebook text and Illustrations. They should reflect upon the text-image interdependency, the author’s/illustrator’s intend and the possible effects artistic decisions have on the reader.
Materials: Copies of the book
Paper and pens
Description:
Step 1: The teacher sets up five tables with a topic and guiding questions written on a paper lying in the middle of each table. Students choose a table and topic. The teacher should make sure that the numbers are even.
Step 2: Each group of students starts discussing their topics and assigned questions:
• Narrative
o How would you summarize the plot?
-o What is the topics and themes of the picturebook?
-o How would you describe the setting?
-o How would you describe the characters?

- Text
  o How would you describe the features of the text?
  o Which grammatical features (parts of speech, sentence structure) can you find?
  o How would you describe the style and mood of the text?
  o Which literary and narrative devices can you find in the text?

- Illustrations
  o Where do you find signs of motion and how are they illustrated?
  o How would you describe the colors of the illustration and what effect do they have on you?
  o What can you say about the use and depiction of space, backgrounds, layout, positions, and perspectives?
  o Is there anything special about the layout of the text or typography that you noticed?

- Text-picture-relationship and paratext
  o How do the text and illustrations work together?
  o Where do text and illustrations differ from each other? Give examples and describe those examples.
  o What general information can you give about the paratext of the book? (Page numbers, material, cover, title, and front/back matter)
  o What kind of parallels can you draw from this book to other texts?

Step 3: The results of the discussions are presented by representatives of the groups and a general feedback round marks the end of the discussion.

Challenges:
In case the majority of students want to work on the same topic the teacher has to find a solution to maintain a balance and have the same amount of people in each group.

If it is the students’ first time analyzing a picturebook the teacher should probably model how to manage such an analysis. An activity such as the one presented here is certainly better suited for students who are already familiar with the process of analyzing picturebooks.

MORE POST-READING ACTIVITIES

Scrivener (2011) and Ur (2012) recommend a variety of different reading, speaking, and writing tasks. They suggest responses to the text, such as letters to the author or any other kind of reply (cf. Scrivener 2011, 268 and Ur 2012, 49), as well as adding information to the text or changing its tense or genre (cf. Ur 2012, 49). Miller presents similar ideas and suggests to “create stories from illustrations alone, change the endings, add new characters to the stories,
or create new stories with a similar plot device” (Miller 1998, 380). Scrivener (2011) further includes acting, or bringing events on a list in the correct order (cf. 268).

Moreover, students could guess and explain why Jerome decided to collect words, who or what inspired him to do so. They could also be asked to think about Jerome’s backstory, create a character profile or describe his family and friends. In addition, the whole story could be retold from another character’s perspective and how they perceived Jerome and what happened. Due to the variety of difficult and unusual words in the text, teachers could also include working with dictionaries in an activity. Furthermore, personal responses such as journal entries can always foster creative and critical thinking. And once students have discussed and understood the power of words and importance of word choice, they might be more willing to edit their own texts, based on what they have learned from the picturebook.

Finally, I want to conclude this subchapter with a tip by Ur (2012). She argues that no matter how many activities you have performed, you should close the lesson or lessons based on the picturebook with a final reread because “[t]he students should be left with the literature itself echoing in their minds, not the comments!” (225).

4.3.4 Project Ideas

As previously mentioned, some vocabulary items can be discussed, taught, and learnt “simply because they are fun or interesting items in themselves” (Ur 2012, 65). The following activity or project has a similar purpose of vocabulary expansion and follows the same principle as Ur’s suggested activities “word of the day” and “show and tell” (ibid). In the second activities students are supposed to research new words and present them. Hence, teaching their peers the new words (cf. ibid). This is also the effect the following project should have. Students should be more aware of the beauty of language as well as the importance and effects of word choice.

Scrivener (2011) also suggest similar activities of collecting known or unknown words. Additionally, he advises visual organizers (colors and sketches) and rearranging collected words as a useful activity (cf. 208-209). Including fun and creative activities, such as doodling or sketchnotes, might not only be useful but also fun for students to do.

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10 For more information on working with dictionaries see Scrivener 2011, 305.
ALL-YEAR-LONG COLLECTING WORDS

**Purpose:** Students are supposed to collect interesting words they read throughout the year and expand their vocabulary. They are encouraged to be creative as their presentation might include speaking or writing skills or other creative ideas.

**Description:**
All year long, students collect words from the textbook, newspapers, online articles, novels and texts they read in class, or from the texts they read independently. They might use a journal or a box, which they can decorate creatively, for their collection. At the end of the year or in a special moment during the year, students are asked to present their best or their favorite words in a creative way. They may draw a picture, make a collage, write a poem, compose a song, write a short play, etc. They are free to choose a creative outlet to present their favorite words to the class.

INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECTS

**Purpose:** Students can participate in an interdisciplinary project that combines problem-solving, critical, and creative thinking. Students are supposed to be involved and motivated. They are encouraged to think beyond the borders of disciplines and be creative.

**Description:**
Miller further proposes to let students create their own picturebook in an interdisciplinary project (cf. Miller 1998, 381). He elaborates that “[t]his is also an opportunity for collaboration with the art and family life teachers. The art teachers can guide the type of artwork used for illustrations […]” (ibid). Creating a self-made picturebook in collaboration with the language and art teacher are apparent. Besides creating a new picturebook, characters from the book could be formed as sculptures or made as puppets.

What is more, drama and music could be included as well. Students could stage a whole picturebook as a play and perform it in front of parents or other classes. Or they could just act out separate scenes, while other students have to guess the content of the scenes and their page numbers. In collaboration with the music teacher students could compose or organize a soundtrack for picturebooks. They could also perform music written for the story or create a video, resembling a short film.

The multimodality of the format suggests that there are sheer endless possibilities of creative, collaborative, and interactive language activities in combination with The Word Collector.
4.4 Reflection

The content analysis of *The Word Collector* in the first subchapter is qualitative and open to interpretation. The attempt to find appropriate criteria led to using Staiger’s (2014) five-dimensional model for picturebook analysis. Staiger’s explanations were used as guidelines. The analysis demonstrated the creative style and potential Reynolds’ picturebook has for younger and older readers as well as EFL language learners. In order to complete the assessment of the picturebook’s potential for language learning, several pre-reading and post-reading activities were presented. Depending on the complexity and difficulty of the activities, as well as the precise wording used for instructions and in the materials, all activities can be adapted for different levels and age groups.

Due to its universal setting and theme, the book can be utilized at different stages. It could be included into a unit on poetry as well as a unit on the power of language and words. Because of all the previously mentioned aspects, the inspiring story as well as implicit and explicit messages from the author *The Word Collector* is definitely worth having a look at and introducing to students.
5 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to analyze the potential of picturebooks in regard to language learning in an upper secondary EFL classroom. This research interest led to an extensive literature review of the state of the art of language learning theories and discussions concerning the features of the format and how it is best integrated in an educational context. The theoretical first part was followed by the analysis of an example book, *The Word Collector* (2018) by Peter H. Reynolds, and exemplary activities.

Picturebooks have been and are still vastly judged and often criticized when it comes to their suitability for an older readership, based on their commonly simple language and colorful visuals. Given the impressive amount of research, studies, and articles on picturebooks used in the primary classroom, it is reasonable that the restriction that ‘picturebooks are for young children’ is still widely maintained. However, the format’s potential for more advanced students is often falsely disregarded or plainly misunderstood. This has become clear throughout the findings of every chapter in this thesis. In fact, this has become evident through the increasing number of publications dealing with projects in the American L1 high school language arts and the German EFL secondary context. Besides, the variety of book suggestions and teaching advice distributed by the American teaching community on Instagram, blogs, websites and other social media platforms, proves the format’s increasing appeal.

Picturebooks are literature and they are art. Their language, while being accessible, is simultaneously rich and figurative. Their illustrations are artistic masterpieces and examples of various materials, techniques, and styles (cf. Rief 1992, 71). Both layers, verbal and visual, are aesthetically appealing and full of depth, offering encouragement to be explored and interpreted. Like their relatives, comics and graphic novels, picturebooks are defined by their multimodality and complexity. All their features and layers are exceptional objects for analysis and discussion with adolescent students.

Due to their form, picturebooks are highly suitable to prepare students for the demands of our globalized modern society, which is intensely influenced by visuals. Through picturebooks, educators can facilitate students to develop and train their symbolic competence (cf. Kramsch 2006, 251) and multiple literacies. It is not enough for students to simply learn how to communicate, meaning exchanging words, in a foreign language. They are humans with personalities and feelings and they are interacting in a connected world of different cultures and symbols (cf. ibid). Literary literacy, visual literacy, and emotional literacy are just three examples of the multiple literacies that students need to further develop during their education.
Working with picturebooks and considering the principles of Cope and Kalantzis’ (2015) pedagogy of Multiliteracies will assist students in mastering the new challenges. In addition, it is crucial to encourage students to be creative, to play with language (cf. Cook 2000), and to enjoy reading as an aesthetic experience (cf. Rosenblatt 1978; Delanoy 2002). Reading can be more than just the search for information. It should be an experience and a pleasure.

In the upper secondary EFL classroom, the work with picturebooks can facilitate language awareness and development. Activities connected to different example books present opportunities to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing competences. As English picturebooks are usually written with native speakers in mind, their vocabulary can be demanding. Consequently, they are an excellent source for vocabulary expansion for language learners. The visual element provides valuable support for struggling students, while at the same time it offers a variety of interpretation possibilities for advanced readers.

Expanding the contemplation of linguistic benefits fostered by picturebooks, their potential as accomplished mentor texts comes to mind. Fictional picturebooks are literary texts. When they are well-crafted, they can be discussed as model texts for story patterns, story development, and successful storytelling in general. As authentic material, picturebooks can teach students by example. Whether teachers want to call them example texts, model texts, or mentor texts, it is apparent that the format is an abundant source for analysis and inspiration.

Another striking perk of picturebooks relates to their ability to help teachers motivate, engage, encourage, and empower students. The combination of text and visuals is compelling, even for reluctant or struggling readers. Picturebook stories as well as illustrations can evoke strong feelings. This may lead to an increased involvement when students wish to respond to what they have heard or read. The involvement of the teacher can be characterized as fulfilling the role of a facilitator. Initially, they are the ones that select the books. Following that, they are supposed to support their students as best as they can in order to maximize learning success but to create a positive learning environment too. Working with picturebooks is beneficial. It should also be enjoyable, for students and for teachers. Despite their didactic potential, the format is more than a mere tool for language teaching. It is always supposed to be valued for its aesthetic qualities (cf. Pantaleo 2014, 324).

Judging from the literature review and research conducted for this thesis, the potential of picturebooks for the upper secondary classroom is increasingly recognized. The extent to which this theory has been applied to teaching practices in Austrian EFL classrooms is not apparent.
yet. This may be an interesting topic for further exploration. Furthermore, it could be interesting to evaluate the opinions of Austrian educators. Another compelling object of research is an assessment of the actual use of picturebooks in the upper secondary EFL classroom in Austria.

The analysis of *The Word Collector* by Peter H. Reynolds in accordance with Staiger’s (2014) five-dimensional model for picturebook analysis has shown that this book is suitable for classroom use with younger and older students. All tasks suggested can be adapted in regard to age and language proficiency level. Reynolds’ creative content, artistic style, and inspirational message is convincing. Despite possible challenges connected to the simplistic illustrations, brief text, or occasionally difficult words, the book is a good choice for an EFL lesson. Its content, as well as its form, has a lot of potential for language learning purposes and creative activities. This potential is worth being explored in the field.

The purpose of this thesis was to analyze and promote the potential of picturebooks for the upper secondary EFL classroom. As scholars such as Birketveit (2015) still feel compelled to call picturebooks “a largely undiscovered treasure trove in English as a foreign language (EFL) today” (2), hopefully this thesis is one more piece of encouragement to explore the treasures that are picturebooks.
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**Picturebooks mentioned**


