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# Picturebook Endpapers: Resources for Literary and Aesthetic Interpretation

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# Picturebook Endpapers: Resources for Literary and Aesthetic Interpretation

## **Abstract**

In this article, we explore one of the important peritextual features of picturebooks - the endpapers. In order to represent the rich diversity of form and function displayed by endpapers, we group examples along two dimensions: whether the endpapers are illustrated or unillustrated, and whether the front and back end papers are identical or dissimilar. Within the four categories delineated by these two dimensions, we further articulate the various roles that endpapers can play in the construction of meaning from picturebooks. We present quotations from young children that show how they use endpapers as resources for literary and aesthetic interpretation, and provide suggestions for the integration of talk about endpapers within classroom literature discussions.

## **Keywords**

picturebooks, endpapers, young children

## **Disciplines**

Literature in English, British Isles

## **Comments**

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## **Picturebook Endpapers: Resources for Literary and Aesthetic Interpretation**

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In addition to illustrations for every page of text, contemporary picturebooks have other features and conventions that have evolved to add to the richness of the form. In the field of children's publishing, illustrators, authors, editors, and book designers have paid special attention to the ways in which the front and back covers, dust jacket, endpapers, half-title and title pages, and dedication page all work together with the text and accompanying illustrations to produce a unified effect. These features are often referred to as the "peritext" of the picturebook, a term first used by Gerard Genette (1987) to describe all the physical features within a book aside from the author's words.<sup>1</sup> Although all books obviously have some of these features, such as covers and a title page, in picturebooks all peritextual features are especially planned and designed so that there is an aesthetic coherence to the entire book (Higonnet, 1990).

In this article, we explore one of the important peritextual features of picturebooks—the endpapers. Endpapers (sometimes called endpages) are pages glued inside the front and back covers of a book, and are thus the first parts of the interior of the book to be seen when the book is opened, as well as the last to be seen after the story has been read and the book is about to be closed. After describing the nature and history of endpapers, we discuss the various types of endpapers and their different purposes and semiotic significance. In presenting this typology, we use examples from many contemporary picturebooks. We also draw on Sipe's (1998, 2000; Sipe & Bauer, 2001) research for numerous vignettes of kindergarten, first, and second grade children's

responses to the endpapers as they hear picture storybooks read aloud and talk about the peritextual features of these books with their teachers.

The nature of the bookbinding process requires that all hardcover books have endpapers. In the history of European bookbinding, the first decorated endpapers seem to have been produced by the technique of marbling, with marbled endpapers becoming a standard feature of high-quality bindings by the middle of the seventeenth century (Wolfe, 1990). The first generally recognized picturebooks for children, the “toy books” of Walter Crane and Randolph Caldecott created in the last half of the nineteenth century, did not include endpapers as they were first produced with soft board covers. It was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that children’s picturebooks began commonly to include illustrated endpapers as a part of the total book design and construction. The endpapers serve to connect the book’s cover to the text block, providing protection to the first and last printed leaves (Roberts & Etherington, 1982). Both front and back endpapers consist of a leaf that adheres to the inside of the cover, known as the *pastedown*, and a facing leaf (not pasted to the cover), known as the *flyleaf*. At the front of the book, the pastedown is on the left and the flyleaf is on the right, whereas at the back of the book, the flyleaf is on the left and the pastedown is on the right.

Although the endpapers, as part of the peritext, mediate the reader’s transition to the interior of the book, neither they nor the peritext more generally have been considered in depth by scholars of contemporary picturebooks (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001).<sup>2</sup> Empirical research on children’s responses to peritextual features of picturebooks is likewise sparse, the single exception being the work of Pantaleo (2003), who examined the ways in which a class of first grade children discussed the peritextual features of nine

picturebooks. The children learned peritextual terminology (such as “endpapers” and “dustjacket”), and used peritextual elements to predict and to confirm their interpretations about characters, plot, setting, and tone of the books. Their talk about peritextual features was found to contribute significantly to their “aesthetic appreciation and cognitive and literary understandings of the books” (p. 74).

Acting as a liminal space (Turner, 1969) to the story, the endpapers constitute a “space between,” where the reader is neither outside nor yet inside the story. Genette (1987) remarks that, “More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold, or—a word Borges used apropos of a preface—a ‘vestibule’ that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back” (pp.1-2). Derrida (1981) suggests that because of the peritext, “the text is no longer the snug airtight inside of an interiority or an identity-to-itself” (p. 35). As a “space between,” the peritext is uniquely placed to draw attention to the materiality of the book and to provide a playful arena for the production of textual meaning (Higonnet, 1990), as well as presenting a rich orienting experience to the reader. Endpapers, in particular, mark a movement from the public space of the cover to the private world of the book, much as stage curtains rising and falling mark the entrance into and exit from a drama (Hillenbrand, cited in Sipe, 2001). During the reading of *The Three Little Pigs* (Marshall, 1989), for example, the teacher showed and read the front cover, which depicts the three pigs on a stage, flanked by brick-red curtains. She then opened the book and silently showed the endpapers, which have no decoration other than their brick-red color. Brad, a first-grader, commented,

Well, it's like a curtain, like on the front cover, the curtain's open, the curtain's

red, and um, then the endpages, they're red, too, and it's like, like the curtain's closed, and you're gettin' ready for the play to start.

Brad had not been taught this idea of the endpapers as stage curtains; he constructed the idea himself. Clearly, he did not take these plain endpapers for granted. He used his knowledge of what a theater looks like before a play begins, and linked this to the two visual experiences of the front cover and the endpapers. Although Brad's teacher had emphasized the importance of the endpapers, in our experience many teachers pay only cursory attention to certain peritextual features, namely the front cover or dust jacket and the title page, skipping over the endpapers entirely. It is our hope that, by discussing the variety of ways in which endpapers function in picturebooks, their importance will become evident to teachers, who will then invite their students to engage in meaningful interpretation of this important peritextual element.

### **Typology of Picturebook Endpapers**

Like the picturebooks of which they are an integral part, endpapers represent a great variety of visual forms and perform a number of different functions. We have attempted to represent this rich diversity of form and function by constructing an orderly typology that presents, however artificially, a way of thinking about endpapers and their contribution to the aesthetics of the picturebook. This typology grew inductively from our examination of hundreds of contemporary picturebooks. We limited our study to picture storybooks, excluding informational texts in picturebook form, and created a set of categories that seemed to comprehensively describe all of the examples we encountered. At the broadest level, we noted that when we open a picturebook, we may see either endpapers of a plain color or endpapers that contain some type of illustration.

If we then compare the front endpapers to those at the back of the book, we may note that they are either identical or somehow different. Thus, there are two main dimensions of our typology – whether the endpapers are illustrated or unillustrated, or whether the front and back endpapers are identical or dissimilar. Within the four categories delineated by these two dimensions, we will further articulate the various roles that endpapers can play in the construction of meaning from picturebooks.

### **1. Unillustrated, Identical Front and Back Endpapers**

Although we may tend to pay little attention to plain colored endpapers, their inclusion in picturebooks is both intentional and considered, and it is worth contemplating their semiotic significance. In some cases, the color of the endpapers reflects the dominant colors in the palette of the illustrations that follow, contributing to the visual aesthetic coherence of the book as a whole. Chris Raschka's Caldecott Medal-winning *The Hello, Goodbye Window* (Juster, 2005), exemplifies this attention to a close color match. Raschka (personal communication, 2006), has explained that, in order to achieve the precise shade of ochre for the plain colored endpapers in this book, he produced several sample color swatches using the mixed media he had employed in the illustrations for the story. In this case, the pleasantly bright color of the endpapers prepares readers for the cheerful and upbeat story that follows. Thus, plain colored endpapers are often used to indicate the overall mood or tone of the story to follow, as in *St. George and the Dragon* (Hodges, 1984), where the endpapers are a bluish gray, indicating the serious tone of the story as a whole, as well as suggesting a twilight atmosphere. In the two openings before the text begins (the title page and the dedication page), the sun is just beginning to rise; thus the endpapers provide an atmospheric

prelude in both a literal and figurative sense. The endpapers may also set the tone in contrast to the cover of the book. In *Faithful Elephants* (Tsuchiya, 1988), the dark maroon color of the endpapers stands in stark opposition to the light, airy, delicate pastel tints of the front cover, signaling the somber story of wartime tragedy to come.

In addition to setting the tone or mood of a story, plain colored endpapers can also refer more specifically to elements of the story, such as particular characters or events in the plot. Such an interpretation was made by kindergarten children responding to *In the Rainfield, Who is the Greatest?* (Olaleye, 2000), an African folktale in which human figures representing Wind, Fire, and Rain hold a contest for supremacy. On the front cover and throughout the story, Wind and Fire are represented as men, whereas Rain is represented as a woman with lavender skin. At the end of the story, when Rain triumphs, the children discussed the significance of the lavender endpapers, with Deena suggesting, “Maybe cause the lady [the illustrator, Ann Grifalconi] liked the color purple and she put in on there because Rain was the best girl.” Here, Deena connects Rain’s victory to the prominent place given to the lavender color in the endpapers. She understands that the endpapers gesture toward the answer to the question posed in the title of the book.

The plain black endpapers in Chris van Allsburg’s (1995) *Bad Day at Riverbend* serve a more complex purpose related to the metafictional plot of the story. The tale concerns the citizens of a small Western town who are suddenly threatened by the appearance of “shiny, greasy slime.” The illustrations of the town are executed in black outline style, as in a coloring book, and the slime, in various scribbled colors, covers parts of the townspeople, their animals, and the landscape. As a posse rides out to find the cause of this affliction, the text of the story states that “they were frozen in the bright



light that suddenly filled the sky.” In the accompanying illustration, a realistically drawn hand appears from the right, holding a red crayon. Here we recognize the source of the slime and the existence of two levels within the story world: the coloring book world of the townspeople and the artistic play of a fictional child. The story concludes with the child heading outside to play, having closed the coloring book. We understand the closing text, “And then the light went out,” in relation to the facing black flyleaf. In other words, the endpapers, in combination with the text, invite the reader to conclude that the bright light is connected to the child’s opening of the coloring book and the darkness to her closure of it. The black endpapers give readers the same experience of “lights out” as the townspeople of Riverbend, just as readers prepare to close the picturebook themselves. Thus the endpapers mediate our experience of the metafictional element in the story.

In a much lighter vein, plain colored endpapers may joke playfully with the reader. In David Macaulay’s (1990) *Black and White*, the reader first encounters the words “Black and White” on the cover, and then opens the book to see bright red endpapers. The endpapers in this case seem to make a visual pun, making us think of the old riddle about what is “black and white and red all over,” and, indeed, newspapers have a part to play in this postmodern tour de force (Kiefer, 1995).

It is important to consider the significance of the various types of paper that are utilized as endpapers. For example, in David Wiesner’s (1999) *Sector 7*, the story of a voyage among clouds, the mottled beige parchment paper endpapers suggest the texture of a cloud. In a similar way, the rough, almost corrugated brown paper used for the endpapers in Maurice Sendak’s (1993) *We Are All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy*,

evokes the cardboard shelters used by the homeless children in the book. Another story about homelessness, Libby Hathorn's (1994) *Way Home*, employs endpapers that resemble crumpled paper, foreshadowing both the theme of the story and the way in which street people are "thrown away" by society. Another type of paper that is occasionally used for contemporary picturebooks, marbled paper, was extensively used during the Victorian era (Wolfe, 1990). This element of the historical tradition of bookmaking is referenced by the endpapers in *The Book that Jack Wrote* (Scieszka, 1994), which plays with and subverts such conventions. Christopher Myers' (2000) *Wings*, a contemporary story that draws on the classical myth of Icarus, contains blue and white marbled endpapers, both as a reference to its classical origins and as a means of representing the feathers of the wings so central to the story. As one second-grader observed of these endpapers, "It looks like some kind of antique paper."

## **2. Unillustrated, Dissimilar Front and Back Endpapers**

When examining the endpapers of a picturebook, it is a good idea to attend to both the front and back endpapers, for their meaning may depend on the contrast they present. In Karen Hesse's (1999) *Come On, Rain!*, for example, the vibrant red of the front endpapers suggests the scorching heat and aridity of the city during the dog days of summer. The story is centrally about the relief a rain shower brings to four pairs of mothers and daughters, who emerge from their stifling apartments to dance among the raindrops. The cool, blue back endpapers provide a fitting visual closure to the story. The same transition from red to blue endpapers is used to quite different purpose in Doreen Cronin's (2004) *Duck for President*. Duck's rising ambitions lead him from a successful campaign to depose Farmer Brown, to a gubernatorial victory, and finally to

his election to the highest office in the United States. The red front endpapers and blue back endpapers are appropriate for this American political story, and also serve to represent Duck's journey from the red barn to the White House. Red is used predominantly in the first part of the story, while the Oval Office in Washington is rendered in blue carefully matched to the hue of the back endpapers.

Change in color from front to back endpapers may also relate to the passage of time. In *The Napping House* (Wood, 1984), the story begins on a rainy night when "everyone is sleeping," aptly captured by the dusky gray front endpapers. In the course of the cumulative story, as a succession of characters crowd the granny in her bed, we see out the window that the rain stops and the sun begins to rise. The end of the story comes with the full light of day, and the azure blue back endpapers correspond to the clear morning sky. As first and second graders discussed this book, they noted this change in color and commented on its significance:

Sally: That makes sense, because it's dark when the story starts, so there's a darker endpage, and it's lighter when the story ends. So the endpage is lighter, back there.

Gordon: Yeah, that makes sense! Darker, then lighter. That's different, like most books, the endpages are the same on the front and the back.

These children are clearly aware of the endpapers' potential to contribute important interpretive information; Gordon's comment indicates his familiarity with the design convention of identical front and back endpapers.

In Anthony Browne's (1992) *Zoo*, the front and back endpapers are a part of the serious and subtle message of the book: a meditation on the ways in which human beings

oppress and imprison both animals and each other. The book's front cover presents the title as white text on a black background above a family portrait of a mother, father, and two sons, which is superimposed on a background of bold black and white stripes. From the very beginning of this carefully designed book, the reader is alerted to the possibility of stark contrasts or reversals in the story to come. The front endpapers repeat this contrast, with the pastedown in white and the flyleaf in black. As the family tours the zoo, the father and sons demean and criticize the animals, displaying increasingly obnoxious behavior, while the mother appears ever more distraught. These portrayals of people appear consistently on the left hand side of the double spreads, while the zoo animals are depicted on the right hand side. The father and sons show no compassion for the animals, which Browne casts through both text and pictures as miserable in their bare and sterile cages. Mum concludes, "I don't think the zoo really is for animals. I think it's for people." This reversal of perspective is further emphasized on the following, final opening of the picturebook, with its illustration of one of the sons imprisoned in an empty cage, and the words, "That night I had a very strange dream." The back endpapers are the mirror image of the front endpapers, with the flyleaf, now on the left side, black and the pastedown white. Because the design of the book has associated human beings with the left hand side of the spread and animals with the right hand side, the reversal of black and white on the endpapers is a visual semiotic gesture toward this crucial subtext. The endpapers echo Mum's comment, which is both about the purpose of zoos and the broader philosophical question of the nature of being human.

### **3. Illustrated, Identical Front and Back Endpapers**

In our third major grouping, identical front and back endpapers feature various types of illustrations that relate to plot, setting, characters, or visual design elements in the story. In Maurice Sendak's (1963) classic *Where the Wild Things Are*, the endpapers are illustrated with overlapping shapes resembling leaves, which echo the stylized palm trees on the cover, and suggest the lush foliage of a tropical forest. The somewhat muted palette and fine black crosshatched lines, employed by Sendak throughout the book, are prefigured in the endpapers. As first and second graders interpreted these endpapers, several children suggested what perspectives might produce the image shown. Gordon interpreted the image as "the tops of the trees." Jim agreed, commenting that the endpapers reminded him of "an airplane picturing that or a helicopter." They also suggested what might lie beyond the leaves: "Wild things are in a forest." The endpapers seem to function as stage curtains for the drama of Max's adventures in the land of the Wild Things. Just as Sendak's endpapers gesture to the setting of that story, the front and back endpapers of Martin Waddell's (1992) *Owl Babies* represent the bark of the tree where the three owlets anxiously await the return of their mother. The endpapers place the reader in the same secure, comfortable setting, alongside Sarah, Percy, and Bill at home in a "hole in the trunk of a tree." Thus we as readers are prepared to identify with the babies' eagerness to be reunited with their mother and the comfort they feel at the beginning and end of the story when the family is gathered together.

David Diaz's Caldecott Medal-winning illustrations for *Smoky Night*, Eve Bunting's (1994) story of the Los Angeles race riots, include endpapers in the mixed media collage style featured throughout the book. The endpaper collage is an embellished version of the background used on the eleventh opening of the story, where a

firefighter rescues two missing cats belonging to the protagonist and his neighbor. The collage materials, including matches, a red warning reflector, and representations of flames on a background of wood, hint at the physical destruction and the chaos left in the wake of the riots. Thematic and plot elements are also present in the endpapers for *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, 1969). Carle's characteristic painted tissue paper collage is studded with hundreds of white holes, representing the voracious appetite of the title character. The story follows the caterpillar on his gustatory adventures, with the holes appearing even more dramatically in the illustrations as a series of circular cutouts. A third example of the connection between endpapers and story plot also features the work of Eric Carle: Bill Martin Jr.'s (1967) *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*. The structure of the story is a chain of colors and animals (brown bear, red bird, yellow duck, etc.), linked by the repeating pattern of the text. It is noteworthy that the endpapers for this book consist of a series of nine horizontal bands of torn painted tissue paper exactly corresponding to the color sequence in the book, from the brown bear through to the goldfish.

A picturebook's endpapers can only be fully understood after the whole picturebook is studied. In these books, the front endpapers may be seen as an opportunity to speculate about the book that will follow, whereas readers may be in a position to more completely understand the significance of the same image when they encounter it on the back endpapers. Most American published versions of *Red Riding Hood* end happily, with the rescue of Red Riding Hood and her grandmother by a hunter or woodsman. In contrast, Christopher Coady's (1991) dark and sinister retelling ends with the words, "...And the wolf threw himself on Red Riding Hood and gobbled her up." This abrupt

conclusion is prefigured in the dark palette and shadowy, autumnal scenes throughout the book. The endpapers show several fallen leaves lying atop a cloak, which is rendered in deep shades of red and maroon. Commenting on this image, first-grade children identified Red Riding Hood's cloak, and wondered why it was on the ground, strewn with leaves. When the children saw the same image on the back endpapers, they realized its significance: "She's really dead now." Another example of a book with endpapers that allude to the fate of the characters and repay study after the story is finished is Arthur Yorinks' (1990) *Ugh*, a humorous gender-reversed variant of *Cinderella* with a setting in the Stone Age. Ugh, the Cinderella figure, lives with his two brothers and two sisters, who make him "clean the cave and find food and wash clothes" while they go "to the grove and watch[ed] dinosaurs eat trees." Ugh's turn in fortunes begins when he invents the first bicycle and abandons it when he misunderstands the acclaim of the crowd as hostility. As the tribe members seek to find the creator of this marvelous invention, Ugh's siblings claim ownership, but it is only Ugh who can ride the bike around the block. Ugh is proclaimed king, while "his brothers and sisters were so upset that they threw themselves into the ocean and were eaten by a whale." The main events of the story, including Ugh's invention of the bicycle, the adulation of the crowd, and the fate of his brothers and sisters, are presaged in the front and back endpapers, which resemble cave paintings.

Illustrators may utilize a pattern of repeated images in endpapers. In Kevin Henkes' (2004) Caldecott-winning *Kitten's First Full Moon*, for example, the identical front and back endpapers are completely covered by many rows of heavily black-outlined white circles on a gray background. A column of these same circles also appears on the

half title page, and throughout the book the moon is represented as a white circle with a thick black border, so this motif is sustained from cover to cover. The series of circles on the endpapers suggests that the story recounts the first of what will be many full moons for the tiny kitten. A similar repetition of circular forms comprises the endpaper art for *Knuffle Bunny* (Willems, 2004), the story of young Trixie's loss of a beloved stuffed toy rabbit at the Laundromat. Each image shows a wide-eyed Knuffle Bunny peering helplessly through the window on the circular washer door as it spins through suds in the wash cycle. Upon seeing the endpapers, Emma, a three-year-old, exclaimed, "I know what happens! I know because he is in this picture here and when he gets lost he is in the washer the whole time, but no one knows that except we know." She then explained that she knows what will happen because "it's in these pictures in the front," demonstrating her understanding that the repeated image lies at the center of the plot. A third example of repeated illustration on endpapers is found in Tony Kushner and Maurice Sendak's *Brundibar* (2003), a retelling of a children's operetta performed by Jewish children at the Nazi concentration camp Terezin. The rose-orange endpapers are composed of repeated images of a boy sitting atop a bird in flight. Birds, representing both menace and escape, figure prominently in many of the illustrations throughout the story. Near the close of the story, the same repeated motif of the boy flying atop a bird, in somber violet, forms the background for one of the operetta's songs, which references the flight of the blackbird and the sinister passing of time. The following double spread also depicts children astride blackbirds, who seem to be abducting them from their mourning mothers. At the end of the story, children appear on colorful orange and pink birds, as they end their song in triumph. Although this triumph may be understood in a tragically ironic way because



of the horrific concentration camp setting, the book's orange-rose endpapers nevertheless provide a note of hope and optimism.

Endpapers may also be illustrated with a number of images of a story character. Though Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) assert, "A common device is to depict the main character several times on endpapers, performing various actions, most often not mentioned inside the book" (p. 247), we did not find this technique to be particularly widespread. One notable example is *Owen* (Henkes, 1993), the story of a young mouse and his attachment to Fuzzy, his beloved blanket. The matching front and back endpapers show Owen and Fuzzy in four different poses, with each pose repeated to form a diagonally striped pattern. In Ian Falconer's (2003) third book about Olivia the pig, *Olivia...and the Missing Toy*, the endpapers show a 12-step process whereby Olivia secures her "best toy" to a wall using adhesive tape, a procedure that might have prevented the traumatic toy loss recounted in the story. In both cases, the endpaper images are consonant with the stable characterization across each story: Owen's devotion to Fuzzy, and Olivia's spunk and self-reliance.

#### **4. Illustrated, Dissimilar Front and Back Endpapers**

In our final major grouping, the front and back endpapers are composed of different illustrations that frame the story in various ways. An easy but effective way of making the illustrations different is to simply reverse the illustration from the front endpapers so that it appears as a mirror image on the back endpapers. One of the most distinguished examples of this technique appears in Paul Zelinsky's Caldecott-winning *Rapunzel* (1997), with the endpapers' panoramic village scene of trees, a river, and tile-roofed buildings. Zelinsky makes particularly deft use of conventions of directionality,

with the front endpapers showing a peacock and a villager with his donkey facing to the right, inviting the viewer to turn the page. On the back endpapers, the reversed Italian Renaissance-style painting provides elegant closure to the story, with the peacock and villager looking left toward the final pages. A similar effect, executed horizontally rather than vertically, is the “stupendous star-filled ceiling” depicted on the endpapers in Maira Kalman’s (1999) *Next Stop Grand Central*. Yet another variation on this mirroring technique is the left to right transposition of endpaper images. At the beginning of *Madlenka* (Sis, 2000), the pastedown (left) shows the Earth, resembling a blue marble in the vastness of outer space, whereas the front flyleaf (right) zooms in for a closer view of the planet with its continents and oceans. These same illustrations are utilized at the back of the book, where the left-hand image depicts the closer view of the earth and the right-hand image shows the Earth from farther away. The illustrations themselves, however, are not reversed; it is only their placement on the left or right that has changed.

Different front and back endpapers may also serve to represent changes that have occurred over the course of the story. Anthony Browne’s (1989) *The Tunnel* tells the story of a brother and sister “who were not at all alike.” On the left page of the first opening, portraits of the two children are presented on contrasting backgrounds: the girl before an interior wall covered in flowered wallpaper and the boy before a red brick wall. These same walls appear in the two illustrations on the right page, where the girl is curled up with a book on a windowsill while her brother plays soccer outside. Though estranged at the beginning, the children grow close through a fantastic adventure in which the girl rescues her brother, a change in their relationship that is anticipated and reflected by the book’s endpapers. The front endpapers show the floral wallpaper and a book on the

pastedown, while the flyleaf shows an expanse of brick wall. The back endpapers maintain the orientation of the backgrounds, but now the book appears against the brick wall, alongside a soccer ball. Because both the book and the floral wallpaper have been strongly associated with the girl, and the brick wall and soccer ball with the boy, the placement of the book and the ball together against the exterior brick wall suggests both the new bond the siblings share as well as the girl's movement from passivity to active exploration. Gordon, a first-grader, remarked on the difference between the front and the back endpapers. As he speculated about the reason for the change, he drew a parallel with the change in the siblings' relationship: "But when they got happy, they put the soccer ball there, they put their things together."

Differences in the front and back endpapers may also be related to changes in story setting and the ways in which we interpret characters' feelings or emotions. In *Fox* (Wild, 2000), the same forest scene of trees and rocks is presented in strikingly different endpaper palettes, in bright orange and red at the front and verdant greens and blues at the end. The story begins as Dog and Magpie, both injured in a forest fire, band together to overcome their disabilities. Though the lonely and envious Fox tries to break apart their friendship, Magpie finally realizes that Dog's devotion is irreplaceable. The change from a palette of destruction to one of life and growth is consonant with the renewal of a forest after a fire, and also suggest that Dog and Magpie's friendship will be renewed. On a lighter note, the front and back endpapers in *Wolf!* (Bloom, 1999) show the changes wrought in a village by the spread of reading and storytelling. In the story, a wolf, frustrated by his inability to scare a group of farm animals engrossed by books, decides to learn to read for himself and is accepted by the animals as a fellow storyteller. The front

endpapers depicts the wolf walking through a village full of morose and isolated inhabitants, whereas the back endpapers shows the same village happily transformed by the presence of the storytelling animals. In the classic Caldecott winner *Make Way for Ducklings* Robert McCloskey (1941) employs front and back endpapers that also suggest changes in the ducks and their island home. On the front endpapers, a series of eight images of hatching ducklings running from the upper left to lower right could be understood either as the chronological sequence of one duckling's emergence from its egg, or as all eight ducklings from the story ranged in their trademark line. The back endpapers are blank, suggesting that the ducklings have left the island where they hatched and moved closer to maturity. A final example of the endpapers reflecting changes over the course of the story is Barbara Reid's (2003) astonishing Plasticine illustrations in *The Subway Mouse*, in which a mouse born and raised "below the platforms in a busy subway station" eventually achieves his dream of reaching Tunnel's End and catches his first glimpse of the sky. The endpapers show the change in the scope of the mouse's world, from bleak gray concrete walls on the front endpapers to an expansive blue sky dotted with fluffy clouds at the back.

Some picturebooks use the endpapers both to begin and end the narrative. In Steven Kellogg's (1991) version of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, for example, the front endpapers show the giant, having descended from his sky-castle in a tornado, stealing gold, the singing harp, and the hen that lays the golden eggs from a pirate ship. The title page continues the story, depicting the giant's return to his castle via tornado; the sinking pirate ship; and our first sight of Jack, who is looking at a procession of a king and queen and their retainers on horseback. All of these details were noted by first and second

grade children. Robert noticed that "the story shows how the giant got the gold." Don said, "First the giant steals the gold from the pirates, and then, Jack steals the gold from the giant." Also present on the endpapers, title page, and dedication page are images of a hot-air balloon with a bearded man in a star-studded robe. This man is also depicted on the first and second openings. On the first opening (the beginning of the verbal text), the man holds a book in which he is painting. The arrangement of golden blocks on this small book is identical with the arrangement of the large golden text blocks on the opened book we hold in our hands. The implication is that this wizard is writing the story. Don observed, "Hey, that guy is writing the book! He's probably an artist, maybe a magician, too!" Don then turned to the end of the book, pointing out that the wizard was also depicted on the back endpapers: "He's here again at the end. And the book says 'finished.' [The small book the wizard is holding shows the word 'finis']. He made the book. He's the magician, the guy who made the whole entire book!" The back endpapers truly conclude the story, showing Jack and his family in a grand coach proceeding home to his castle. Thus, this is a case in which to omit discussion of the endpapers would be to ignore the beginning and ending of the story.

Two picturebook versions of *Noah's Ark*, by Peter Spier (1977) and Jerry Pinkney (2002), provide an interesting contrast in the way they utilize endpapers as a part of their retelling of the Biblical story of the Flood. In Spier's version, the front endpapers show Noah working in his vineyard on the flyleaf, while the destructive qualities of humanity, in the form of a conquering army leaving a city in flames, are depicted on the pastedown. In the background are cedars of Lebanon, the symbols of peace, righteousness, and endurance. The back endpapers again depict Noah on the flyleaf, planting a vineyard in

the soggy soil. Instead of the red and orange flames of the burning city, we see the red and orange of a rainbow, with the cedars of Lebanon flourishing under it. The images of death have been replaced by images of life and hope, and Noah is engaged in the same occupation as before. This brings the story to a satisfying closure, and is one of the principal ways Spier achieves resolution and a sense of completion. Jerry Pinkney also makes full use of the endpapers in his version, using them to set Noah's story in the broader context of the Genesis creation account. On the front endpapers, Pinkney's accomplished watercolor painting depicts the profusion of life, and includes the words, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth... And God saw that it was good." This prepares readers for the first opening, where a burning city demonstrates that human beings have spoiled the beauty and goodness of the world. At the end of the book, the last opening shows the rainbow symbolizing God's promise. The promise, "Seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, night and day, shall never cease as long as the earth endures," accompanies an image of the entire planet encircled by rainbows on the back endpapers. In this way, Pinkney has framed the story of Noah as part of the ongoing story of humanity, whereas Spier begins and ends with Noah.

Our final examples of books with different illustrations on the front and back endpapers demonstrate the potential of endpapers to extend or blur the boundaries of the story. In *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* (Willems, 2003), the front endpapers provide the first indication of the pigeon's cherished dream of driving a bus. The pigeon appears on the pastedown, dwarfed by an enormous thought bubble that includes five images of the pigeon as a bus driver. The story recounts his unsuccessful quest to take the wheel, and concludes with a newfound desire to drive a truck. While the pigeon spots

the truck in the last opening, it is only on the back endpapers that this new dream is represented in another thought bubble, with images of the pigeon as a truck driver. Just as the pigeon's dream on the front endpapers generated the story within the book, we are invited to interpret the dream on the back endpapers as the opening to another adventure. *Diary of a Worm* (Cronin, 2003) utilizes endpapers to blur the boundaries of the story, told through the worm's diary entries. The endpapers, which appear as pages in a scrapbook, show various photos and mementos of events that are not repeated in the course of the story. For example, the front endpapers include taped-in snapshots of the worm's first day at school and "The family vacation – on Compost Island," as well as his report card. The back endpapers include photographs of other memorable events, a scrap of paper money captioned "Isn't this leaf awesome?!", and a comic strip drawn by the worm. The endpapers therefore present readers with alternative and additional ways of recording memories, and gesture toward events in the worm's life that may have both preceded and succeeded the story told in the diary.

### **Conclusion**

The typology we have presented can be useful to educators as they talk with children about the design and aesthetic unity of picturebooks. We believe that the examples we have discussed in each category of the typology represent the major forms and purposes of endpapers in contemporary picturebooks, and that these examples demonstrate the interest and interpretive sophistication even young children can display given teachers' support. One suggested procedure in sharing picturebooks with children is to make a habit of examining both the front and back endpapers before the story is read in order to assist children in making predictions and to speculate about the meaning of the

endpapers. Special attention should be paid to whether the front and back endpapers are the same or different, and the possible significance of this choice. We have found that children rather quickly become accustomed to close examination of endpapers and that they engage in interpreting them with a great deal of enthusiasm and insight. After the story is read, the endpapers bear revisiting, because their complete semiotic significance is often not apparent until the conclusion of the story.

Once children know the conventions of picturebook design, including the various uses and purposes of endpapers, they can begin to appreciate how some books subvert these conventions. In *The Stinky Cheese Man*, Jon Scieszka's (1992) amusing collection of postmodern fairy tales, readers are startled to see an endpaper before the end of the story. Jack the narrator explains this bizarre placement as he tries to trick his nemesis the Giant: "Shhhhh. Be very quiet. I moved the endpaper up here so the Giant would think the book is over." This is only one of the many violations and subversions of picturebook conventions in this amusing book. Before the teacher read Jack's explanation of his trickery, a first-grade child recognized that the endpaper is misplaced: "That's funny—the endpaper isn't supposed to be there." In other words, the child had internalized the convention of the endpapers' placement, and could appreciate the ways in which *The Stinky Cheese Man* plays with this convention.

Although we have focused on endpapers in this article, it is important to examine the relationship of picturebook endpapers to other parts of the peritext. In many of our examples, we have referred to the ways in which the endpapers relate to the front and back cover, title page, and the rest of the illustration sequence. Picturebooks are aesthetic wholes, so carefully designed that everything in the book is the result of someone's



choice, and we can speculate with children about why those choices were made. In some instances, we can be certain about the rationale for a design choice. For example, illustrator David Wiesner (2001) comments about his Caldecott-winning *The Three Pigs*, "Then, there are the other subtle details that are so much fun to pay attention to in bookmaking. I knew early on that I wanted the binding to reflect the story. So the reddish spine represents the brick, the gray body of the binding the sticks, and the ochre endpapers the straw of the story" (quoted in Silvey, 2001, p. 49). However, if we do not know the illustrator's reasons for a design choice, we are free to speculate with children about possibilities that make sense. When we discuss picturebooks with children, we should make them aware that every element in the picturebook is meaningful and worthy of interpretation. David Lewis (2001) writes of the "ecology" of picturebooks, emphasizing the need to "look for the organized, coherent multiplicity characteristic of such [ecological] systems (p. 52). If we communicate this clearly in our discussions with children, they will quickly adopt this stance. Gordon, a first-grader, was a child who became particularly intrigued with the semiotic significance of endpapers. He assumed that there was always a reason for the choice of their color or design. During a readaloud of *Changes* (Browne, 1990), Gordon speculated about the endpapers, which are painted a light tan with small darker brown spots:

Gordon: Hmm. I wonder if they chose different kind of endpages. I wonder why they did choose this. Wait, let's look through the book, we might notice something like this. [He pages through the book, coming to an illustration of a wall that is a similar color.] That's sort of the same texture here. ...Maybe the walls are the same [turns back to the endpapers].

Teacher: So the endpages represent, maybe, the walls?

Gordon: Maybe. Dots on 'em. Probably you can't just see that stuff. All the little dots and scratches. All the little dots, rock, in the wall. Or the ground. It makes you feel like you're on the ground, or something.

Notice how Gordon uses the language of choice and intentionality, learned from his teacher, to speculate about the significance of the endpapers. He is also interested in relating the endpapers to other parts of the book. Children can also understand the use of endpapers as framing devices for stories and the various ways in which they do this. If teachers attend to the meaning of endpapers, children will too, and their literary and visual aesthetic experience will be enhanced. This kind of discussion deepens and broadens children's critical thinking abilities, their ability to make inferences, and their appreciation of picturebooks as art objects. The endpapers are often excluded or altered in paperback and library editions of picturebooks; therefore, when teachers have a choice of which edition to present to their students, they should consider selecting the trade edition, which is the fullest expression of the intentions of the book's designer, editor, and illustrator. When children make their own books, if they know about the significance of endpapers, they will want to include them as part of their own bookmaking. The teacher's interest in and knowledge and excitement about endpapers are key, and can unlock the great meaning-making potential that endpapers present.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Following Genette's (1987) terminology, peritextual components include conventions contained within the book, whereas the *epitext* is found outside the book in such forms as authorial correspondence and book reviews. *Paratext* refers to both peritext and epitext:

“In other words, for those who are keen on formulae, *paratext* = *peritext* + *epitext*”

(Genette, 1987, p.5).

<sup>2</sup> In their standard texts about contemporary picturebooks, Stewig (1995) and Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) each devote a few pages to a discussion of endpapers within their treatments of peritextual elements. Although Kiefer (1995) mentions endpapers at several points in her text, she does not discuss them in any extended way. Neither Nodelman (1988) nor Lewis (2001), mention endpapers except in passing.

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