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EXPLORING THE WORLDS OF ANTHONY BROWNE: A JOURNEY THROUGH *INTO THE FOREST* & *VOICES IN THE PARK*

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Abstract

Picturebooks possess a unique power to engage readers of all ages through the interplay of text and images. These art forms invite readers into multi-layered worlds where words and pictures enhance one another, creating immersive experiences. This paper explores two exemplary works by Anthony Browne—*Into the Forest* and *Voices in the Park*—which showcase his innovative use of narrative and visual techniques. These picturebooks, celebrated for their artistic quality and complexity, offer rich opportunities for analysis and classroom application. The paper provides a theoretical framework on the nature of picturebooks and their paratextual elements, an exploration of some of the most important Browne's visual and narrative strategies and a detailed analysis of the two books through the lens of inter- and intratextuality, fragmentation, experimentation, and indeterminacy. Additionally, two didactic sequences are proposed for integrating these picturebooks into the primary classroom, aiming to engage students with literature in meaningful, multi-dimensional ways. The paper concludes with a reflection on the findings, acknowledging the study's limitations, and suggesting directions for further exploration.

Key words: picturebooks – Anthony Browne – visual and narrative techniques – didactic sequences – primary classroom

Resumen

Los libros álbum poseen un poder único para captar la atención de lectores de todas las edades a través de la interacción entre el texto y las imágenes. Invitan a los/as lectores a mundos multidimensionales donde las palabras y las imágenes se enriquecen mutuamente. Este trabajo explora dos obras ejemplares de Anthony Browne—*Into the Forest* y *Voices in the Park*—que muestran su innovador uso de técnicas narrativas y visuales. Estos libros álbum, celebrados por su calidad artística y complejidad, ofrecen valiosas oportunidades para el análisis y la aplicación en el aula. El presente trabajo proporciona un marco teórico sobre la naturaleza de los libros álbum y sus elementos paratextuales, una exploración de algunas de las técnicas visuales y narrativas más importantes de Browne, y un análisis detallado de los dos libros a través de la intertextualidad, intratextualidad, fragmentación, experimentación e indeterminación. Además, se proponen dos secuencias didácticas para integrar estos libros en el aula de primaria, con el objetivo de involucrar a los/as estudiantes con la literatura de manera significativa y multidimensional. El trabajo concluye con una reflexión sobre los hallazgos, reconociendo las limitaciones y sugiriendo direcciones para futuras investigaciones.

Palabras claves: libros álbum - Anthony Browne – técnicas narrativas y visuales – secuencias didácticas – aula de primaria

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INTRODUCTION

> When we have been particularly impressed by a book, we feel the need to talk about it (...) We have undergone an experience, and now we want to know consciously what we have experienced.
>
> (Iser, 1980: 295)

Picturebooks are often seen as a stepping stone in a child's reading journey, something to move past once they can read independently and advance to easy readers, chapter books, and novels. As a result, the picturebooks of early childhood are typically left behind (Matulka, 2008). However, picturebooks are art forms with a unique magic, capable of captivating readers of all ages through their harmonious blend of text and pictures. Unlike traditional texts, picturebooks invite readers into layered worlds where images and words coexist, each enhancing the other to create a rich, immersive experience. Often underestimated as being solely for young children, picturebooks can offer profound insights, stimulate imagination, and foster emotional connections that resonate long after the book is closed. It can be said that they are, in a sense, more than just books; they are experiences.

Because of their power and potential, incorporating picturebooks into the English lessons nurtures a space where students can explore complex ideas and experience the world from diverse perspectives. When teachers bring picturebooks, they are not merely sharing stories—they are providing students with tools for understanding themselves and others. They are creating room for learners to see, feel, and question the world around them. Such books become lifelong companions in learning, fostering empathy, critical thinking, and an appreciation for the subtle art of storytelling.

The benefits of picturebooks extend beyond literacy development. As interactive forms of visual art and literature, picturebooks foster visual literacy by teaching students to interpret and analyse images alongside text, an essential skill in our image-rich society. They can introduce complex themes such as identity, conflict, resilience, and community. Picturebooks also encourage repeated readings, which help build comprehension and observation skills, as readers uncover new details each time. These books can address emotional and social development, allowing readers to relate to characters and situations. For learners of all ages, picturebooks serve as a bridge between the familiar and the unfamiliar, between the known and the unknown, supporting both academic and personal growth.

The aim of the present paper is to introduce picturebooks and their characteristics, analyse two picturebooks written and illustrated by Anthony Browne, *Into the Forest* and *Voices in the Park,* and share two didactic sequences to demonstrate how these picturebooks can be used in the English primary classroom. Browne is an artist widely recognised for his innovative contributions to children's literature, particularly within the picturebook world. In our selection, we chose two literary texts which are prime examples of his use of complex narrative and visual techniques, since Browne's picturebooks are celebrated not only for their

artistic quality, but also for their capacity to challenge and engage readers of all ages. This paper also seeks to provide tools for teacher education, enabling educators to maximise the potential of picturebooks, specifically *Into the Forest* and *Voices in the Park*. The more teachers understand these art forms and the key characteristics of Anthony Browne's work, the better equipped they will feel when introducing them into the classroom.

The selection of these two picturebooks has not been randomly made and many reasons can justify the choice. To begin with, both *Into the Forest* and *Voices in the Park* possess strong literary and artistic qualities, making them particularly valuable for analysis and practical classroom activities, opening doors to meaningful learning experiences. Each story presents a powerful plot that is well-designed and unfolds through layers, engaging readers with its depth and inviting them to think, interpret, and feel. The language is creatively crafted and the illustrations, of high artistic quality, enrich the storytelling and transform each page into an interactive experience. Besides, the architectural structure of each book—including peritextual elements like covers, endpapers, and layout—contributes to the narrative and adds layers of meaning that encourage learners to interpret and analyse. Finally, these books also offer intertextual connections, referencing other texts, artworks, and cultural symbols that provide subtle "winks" to attentive readers. All these characteristics transform *Into the Forest* and *Voices in the Park* into complex picturebooks, which require multiple readings and a level of background knowledge that highlights the sophisticated quality of Anthony Browne's work.

The body of this paper will be organised into four sections. In the Theoretical Framework, emphasis will be placed on giving a general outline of the meaning of picturebook and its main types, categories, and genres. Also, the supporting parts of picturebooks, often referred to as paratexts, will be explored due to the potential they have to enhance and extend the reading experience. Following this section, space will be given to explore Anthony Browne's career as well as some of his most notable visual and narrative techniques. A detailed analysis of *Into the Forest* and *Voices in the Park* will be carried out in terms of intertextuality, intratextuality, indeterminacy, and fragmentation. Besides, the analysis will include how Browne experiments with illustrations and typography. Following this, the paper will propose two didactic sequences to be carried out in the English classroom, designed to harness the multi-dimensional qualities of Browne's work to promote student engagement with literature. Finally, the Conclusion will summarise the main aspects of the paper. This section will also deal with the limitations the present study offers and possible suggestions for overcoming them.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section will define the picturebook and explore its various types. Also, this will examine all the elements that are part of the overall design of a picturebook such as the front cover, front matter, back matter, and back cover.

All this knowledge about picturebooks is crucial for teachers to acquire in order to effectively incorporate them into the classroom. A solid understanding of these art forms will help educators feel more

confident and better prepared to select and read picturebooks, as well as implement rich, engaging didactic sequences based on them.

1.1 DEFINITION OF PICTUREBOOK

> A picturebook is a dialogue between two worlds: the world of images and the world of words.
>
> (Marcus, 2002: 3)

As Mourão (2012) suggests, before delving into the definition of what a picturebook is, it is important to explore the three diverse orthographic variations of the word because the way the term is spelt plays an important role in understanding its designation.

The term 'picturebook' can be spelt as a hyphenated word, picture-book (Hunt, 2004); as two distinct words, picture book (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson, 1999; Stafford, 2011), or as a compound word, picturebook (Bader, 1976; Sipe, 1998; Lewis, 2001). While there is still some disagreement on the preferred spelling, the one-word form is more commonly used because the other two forms denote that they are "books with pictures" (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006: 8). Sipe (1998) states that this form highlights "the unity of words and pictures that is the most important hallmark of this type of book" and reflects the "compound nature of the artefact" (Lewis, 2001). This compound form emphasises the interaction between two levels of communication, the verbal (words) and the visual (illustrations). Throughout this paper, the consistent use of 'picturebook' will be maintained.

Following an examination of various spellings, we can now turn our attention to a widely accepted definition of the term 'picturebook.' In her publication *American Picture Books from Noah's Ark to the Beast Within*, scholar Barbara Bader states that a "picturebook is text, illustrations, total design" (1976: 1). This definition highlights the interdependency of words, pictures, and details of design; elements that work together to create meaning (Matulka, 2008). Every aspect of the picturebook –words, illustrations, covers, endpapers, typography, colours– reflects a deliberate decision made by someone and the relationship between all the designated parts is essential for comprehending the picturebook. All the single details, together, create a more powerful impact than each would produce individually, "resulting in an aesthetic whole that is greater than the sum of the individual parts" (Sipe, 2008: 23). To fully appreciate a picturebook, it is crucial to consider all its elements. Focusing on only one aspect means overlooking a significant part of the overall experience. This explains why a picturebook "could not be read over the radio and be understood fully" (Shulevitz, 1985: 15).

Within this whole, there is a close relationship between the verbal and the visual. Picturebooks, including the most traditional ones, are inherently multi-modal texts: the world of words and the world of pictures serve as two ways of conveying thoughts and emotions to readers/viewers (Sipe, 2008). The visual text plays a crucial role, to different extents, in enhancing both the enjoyment and comprehension of the narrative (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999). As Shulevitz (1985) states, the term 'illustration' comes from the Latin verb and means "to light up," "to illuminate". Therefore, the primary purpose of illustrations is to

illuminate the linguistic text, shedding light on words. The role of illustration ranges from a simple explanation of text to its highest accomplishment when it brings spiritual and mental enlightenment. All in all, illustrations can contradict, "extend, clarify, complement, or take the place of words" (Shulevitz, 1985: 15). In the field of teaching English, Mourão (2016: 27) has described this word-image relationship as extending "along a continuum from a simple showing and telling of the same information to a more complex showing and telling of different, even contradicting information". Mourão (2016) also adds that picturebooks with a simple picture-word relationship, in which illustrations align with the text to create a supportive learning environment, are generally used with very small children because this dynamic helps them gain confidence in the process of learning a language whereas picturebooks that belong to the complex end of the picture-word continuum are recommended for older primary students who can understand and fill the gaps between what the images show and what the words say.

In her definition of the term 'picturebook', Bader adds that it constitutes "a social, cultural, historic document" (1976: 1). Picturebooks encapsulate and reflect various aspects of society, culture, and history. This can be seen in both the illustrations and language employed (Mourão, 2016). They may portray social dynamics, relationships, and societal values; they may offer insights into how individuals interact and the prevailing norms and behaviors within a given community or society; or they may provide a lens into different cultures, traditions, and ways of life.[1] It is worth noting, as Sipe (2010) suggests, that if children's literature is to serve as a transformative influence on society, publishers should advocate for a comprehensive array of representations that reflect the growing diversity of readers/viewers.

Bader's definition continues by saying that a picturebook is "foremost, an experience for a child" (1976: 1). However, in my mind, I would replace the word 'child' for 'reader' to be more inclusive in terms of readership. While the picturebook is originally intended for children, it holds the potential to be enjoyed, examined, and appreciated by individuals of all ages. Reading a picturebook, whether alone or in the company of a child, offers a delightful and valuable experience (Matulka, 2008). In fact, older readers can analyse and explore the text-picture relationships, and evaluate how all the constituent elements complement each other and impart meaning, contributing collectively to attain artistic unity (Sipe, 2010).

Finally, Bader adds that as "an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page" (1976: 1). In picturebooks, unlike novels, page breaks (also known as page turns) are deliberately planned, with authors, illustrators, and editors paying careful attention to the transition between one double-page spread and the next one (Sipe, 2010). A pageturner in a picturebook mirrors the notion of cliffhangers found in novels. Similar to how a detail at the end of a chapter generates suspense, prompting further reading, a pageturner in a picturebook, whether verbal or visual, motivates the reader to turn the page and discover the subsequent events. Each page turn escalates reader involvement, offering more information, drama, and action, resulting in a unique reading/interpreting

[1] It is important to note that this applies to literature as a whole and is not a characteristic unique to picturebooks. While these qualities can certainly be observed in picturebooks, they are part of the broader realm of literature.

experience (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006; Matulka, 2008). Turning the page not only introduces a pause but also presents a 'gap of indeterminacy' (Iser, 1980). Readers or viewers are encouraged to become co-authors by filling in these gaps between the spreads with their own interpretations, making the process of turning pages an opportunity for active meaning-making. Simply asking questions about what might have happened between page openings can naturally engage readers in speculating and inferring (Sipe, 2010).

1.2 TYPES OF PICTUREBOOKS

Picturebook is a broad term encompassing various types of books that combine visual art with written text to tell a story. These books come in numerous formats and cover a wide spectrum of genres. Also, they explore diverse subject matter and themes and showcase a variety of illustrative styles.[2] This knowledge will guide, support, and facilitate teachers in selecting picturebooks that are both suitable and engaging for a particular group of learners.

Books designed for infants, typically aged 0 to 2, are referred to as baby books. The categorisation of baby books is based on the materials utilised in their production and baby books include board books, vinyl books, and cloth books (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999). Toy books, also known as engineered or mechanical books, employ paper that has been crafted, involving techniques such as cutting, folding, and constructing, to create pop-up books, flap books, and cut-out books (Matulka, 2008). Concept books are designed to clarify and support the acquisition of letters, numbers, and various concepts such as colours, size, shapes, and opposites. Hence, alphabet and counting books fall into the category of concept books. Alphabet books introduce young children to the shapes, names, and sometimes the sounds of the twenty-six letters by presenting them one at a time. ABC books are classified into three types: theme, potpourri, and sequential. Theme alphabet books centre around a specific theme or topic. Potpourri alphabet books provide authors with extensive creative freedom, connecting alphabet letters to various specific objects, resulting in numerous titles following the "A is for..." pattern. The sequential story alphabet book uses a continuous narrative to introduce the ABC to the reader. Counting books, or number books, introduce young children to numerals and their shapes, their names, the concept of quantity each numeral represents, and the counting sequence (Matulka, 2008; Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999). Wordless books rely solely on meticulously arranged illustrations to convey the narrative. They either contain no text or feature minimal text, typically limited to one or two pages within the book (Tomlinson, 1999). Finally, picture storybooks, the most frequently encountered variety of picturebooks, narrate a story through a combination of illustrations and text, with both elements collaborating and equally responsible for conveying the narrative (Mourao, 2009).[3]

[2] Ellis, G., & Gruenbaum, T. (2024). *Words and pictures library*. Retrieved from https://wordsandpictureslibrary.com/

[3] Distinguishing between literacy and reading is essential. Many of the concept books support the acquisition of literacy, which is not exactly reading. In contrast, wordless and picture storybooks are the ones mainly used for storytelling, read-aloud sessions, creative reading, and interactive reading.

Picturebooks encompass a diverse range of genres and subgenres, terms used to classify stories that share common characteristics. Depending on how genres are interpreted, different categories can merge or evolve into new, distinct genres. The most commonly recognised genres in picturebooks include animal stories, magical realism, realistic fiction, historical fiction, and traditional literature, which is often referred to as folklore. The broad category of traditional literature includes beast tales, cumulative tales, fables, fairy tales, folktales, and fractured tales (Matulka, 2008).

Last but not least, picturebooks can also be classified by the themes they explore, with some addressing crucial social issues. Picturebooks that explore human rights, neurodiversity, learning differences, physical or mental disabilities, gender identity, and broader questions of social justice have become increasingly significant in recent years. These books serve as essential tools for nurturing empathy, promoting inclusivity, and teaching young readers the importance of respecting diverse identities and fundamental human rights. Similarly, picturebooks addressing gender identity seek to break down traditional stereotypes by presenting characters who explore or express diverse gender experiences. These works aim to foster acceptance and understanding among readers (Sutherland & Scott, 2020).

1.3 PICTUREBOOK PARATEXTS

All the elements in a picturebook contribute to its impact. As (Shulevitz, 1985: 113) expresses, a “well-conceived, well-executed book must be thought through to the smallest detail, from conception to production; you must leave nothing to chance”. A successful book requires meticulous planning and execution, leaving no room for chance. It should be a cohesive and well-integrated entity, where each part harmonises with the others and contributes to the overall unity (Shulevitz, 1985). All these parts refer to both the text and the paratext, that is, what surrounds the text.

Genette introduced the term "paratext" (1997), referring to all the elements situated at the "threshold" of a text, which serve as mediators “between the world of publishing and the world of the text” (17). This threshold represents a point where a reader can decide whether to engage with the work or not. Genette further categorised 'paratext' into 'epitext,' encompassing elements external to the book like reviews, interviews, and critical analyses, and 'peritext,' consisting of features within the book such as covers, titles, and endpapers.

The peritext, referred to as ‘supporting parts’ by Matulka (2008), enriches and expands the overall picturebook experience. These elements are intentionally crafted to complement the picturebook's overall design and consist of a front cover, front matter, body, back matter, and back cover (Matulka, 2008). Understanding these elements enables teachers to guide students in exploring the connections between the visual and textual components. It also enhances the reading experience, offers opportunities for deeper engagement with the picturebook, and contributes to the book's aesthetic and thematic coherence.

1.3.1 FRONT COVER

The front cover of a picturebook often plays a vital role in the narrative, especially when the cover image differs from those within the book. In such cases, the story may begin on the cover and extend beyond the final page onto the back cover (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Even though an attractive cover does not necessarily guarantee the quality of the content, covers are significant in the overall design of a picturebook (Matulka, 2008).

The selection of the cover image reflects the authors'—and in some instances, the publishers'—perception of the most exciting or pivotal moment in the story. One might reasonably expect that the cover would not reveal the plot or conflict on the cover. However, remarkably, numerous picturebooks eliminate the suspense generated by an intriguing title by showing the setting or the antagonist on the cover (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006).

1.3.2 FRONT MATTER

The front matter serves as an introduction to a picturebook, consisting of pages preceding the main body of the book. It acts as an invitation to delve into the story and provides designers with a chance to reveal aspects of the narrative (Matulka, 2008). According to Shulevitz (1985), the front matter consists of the half-title page, the title page, the copyright page, and dedication. As can be seen, endpapers are excluded from the front matter as they are regarded as part of the binding. On the contrary, Matulka (2008) states that the front matter comprises all the aforementioned elements along with the endpapers. Despite their primary function of providing structural support to the binding, ensuring the stability and integrity of the book, endpapers possess significant potential. This highlights the reasoning behind the exploration of endpapers within the front matter in this paper. It is noteworthy that the order of the different parts may be adjusted, and certain elements may be combined or omitted. For the purpose of the present work, only the parts that contribute to the analysis will be explored.

Endpapers (also known as end leaves, book linings, or fly leaves), situated immediately inside the front and back covers of a book, serve a practical role in bookbinding by facilitating the attachment of the main body of the book to the cover (Shulevitz,1985). While traditionally “considered a decorative or ornamental aspect of book packaging” (Matulka, 2008: 37), an increasing number of picturebook creators recognise their potential beyond mere decoration. Endpapers can contribute to the narrative in different ways and even influence our interpretation (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006; Lewis, 2001). For instance, they may serve as a transition from the outside world to the story within, preparing the reader for the narrative experience; may contain additional illustrations, hints, or details that complement or expand upon the main narrative; may include maps, diagrams, or other information relevant to the story, providing supplementary details for the reader; may help establish the mood or atmosphere of the story or they may relate symbolically to the theme of the narrative (Lewis, 2001; Matulka, 2008). While front and back endpapers are usually identical in most

picturebooks, they can be strategically employed to highlight changes occurring within the book's storyline (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006).

The half-title page, usually the initial page, contains just the title without any author or publisher details. Half-titles have their roots in a past publishing practice when books were distributed without covers. Half-title pages served to safeguard books stacked in piles within bookstores. The title page normally contains the title of the book, the name of the author (or the translator's name if the book is a translated version of a book originally written in another language), illustrator, and publisher. In general, a small picture can be seen on the title and half-title page, typically depicting a detail from illustrations within the book, often with the background omitted (Matulka, 2008).

1.3.3 BACK MATTER

The back matter refers to the section of the book that follows the main body. Similar to the front matter, its sequence can be adjusted, and specific components may be combined or omitted. It may include an appendix, notes, glossary, bibliography, and/or index although these elements are not typical in picturebooks or storybooks (Matulka, 2008; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006).

1.3.4 BACK COVER

In numerous picturebooks, the back cover extends the front cover, forming a complete image when unfolded. Despite this continuity, there is typically a lack of essential details on the back cover that either complement or contradict the story. This tendency can be attributed to reading conventions: once we finish the verbal text, we tend to assume the narrative has concluded and pay minimal attention to the back cover. Back covers usually contain a brief plot summary, author and illustrator information, age recommendations for readers, excerpts from reviews, details about other books by the same authors, and similar supplementary information (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006).

2. ANTHONY BROWNE

This section will include a brief biography of Anthony Browne's professional life, alongside an exploration of his most notable techniques. These include the use of intertextuality, intratextuality, and indeterminacy, as well as variations in the grammar of illustrations, typographic experimentation, and fragmentation.

Gaining insight into this author and these techniques is particularly beneficial for teachers, as it enables them to better appreciate the layers of meaning within Browne's works and guide students in analysing both the visual and textual elements of his books. Teachers can use Browne's approaches to stimulate critical thinking, enhance visual literacy, encourage creative interpretation, and foster a deeper engagement with literature.

2.1 HIS PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

Anthony Browne, born in Sheffield, England in 1946, is a renowned British writer and illustrator of children's books, especially picturebooks. His distinctive style, characterised by the use of detailed textures, captivating colours, and zoomorphic characters, has captivated readers of all ages. Browne graduated in Graphic Design, but found his true passion in painting, which is reflected in the visual richness of his works. He has published more than fifty books, translated into 26 languages.

Following an apprenticeship as a medical and greetings-card artist, he ventured into creating picturebooks. His stories are rich with meaning, offering layers of meaning to be uncovered by readers (Salisbury & Styles, 2012). Known for his imaginative and visually striking picturebooks, Browne has received several prestigious awards, including the Kate Greenaway Medal twice (in 1983, with *Gorilla*; and in 1992, with *Zoo*) and the Kurt Maschler 'Emil' Award three times (in 1983, 1988 and 1998). In 2000, he became the first British illustrator to receive the Hans Christian Andersen Medal, an international distinction given to authors and illustrators of children's books. From 2009 to 2011, he served as the Children's Laureate.

According to Perrot, a renowned French scholar and critic in the field of children's literature, Anthony Browne can be considered "an artist of unusual talent, exceptional technical skills, and unrivalled imagination, who has taken picturebook illustration into new dimensions" (Perrot, 2000: 1). His impressive body of work is unmistakable for its (sur)realistic, highly detailed illustrations. His images bring an extraordinary level of detail and depth to the picturebook form, perceivable upon close examination (Rodrigues & Pinto, 2024).

As mentioned before, his books transcend age boundaries (a quality that distinctly marks outstanding literary works) and contain front covers that harmonise and integrate seamlessly with back covers, thoughtfully designed endpapers, and meticulously detailed, colourful illustrations. These elements, combined with varied typography and an impactful text, create a symbiotic relationship between words and images that allows for layered, multifaceted interpretations.

2.2 HIS APPROACH TO TEXT AND IMAGE

Browne employs a number of strategies in his picturebooks to challenge the traditional conventions of children's literature and create multidimensional reading experiences. Some of his most notable techniques and characteristics include the use of intertextuality, intratextuality, gaps of indeterminacy, variations in the grammar of illustrations, typographic experimentation, and fragmentation. These visual and textual strategies were selected following an in-depth author study and a thorough exploration of the key characteristics of postmodern picturebooks.

2.2.1 Intertextuality

This term, coined by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, denotes the interdependence of literary texts, highlighting how each text is intertwined with those that have preceded it (Cuddon, 2013). According to Kristeva, "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva,

1986: 37). This view illustrates that meaning is always relational, constructed through dialogue with other texts, cultural references, and ideas. Traditionally, intertextuality has focused on literary references within a text, such as quotations, allusions, or themes borrowed from previous works. However, Kristeva's theory opens a broader understanding that embraces how texts interact with the social and cultural context in which they are produced.[4]

In the works of Anthony Browne, this concept, intertextuality, takes on a particular resonance. Browne's picturebooks are not just stories; they are complex, layered tapestries that draw upon a rich background of literary, visual, and cultural references, encouraging readers—especially young ones—to embark on an exploration that moves well beyond the literal. The act of reading his books becomes a multidimensional experience. Browne interweaves subtle references to well-known works of art, creating a network of visual cues that enrich the narrative and enhance the reader's experience. These references act not only as hidden treasures but also as interpretative challenges, requiring readers to engage in a process of recognising and reinterpreting cultural symbols, thus making reading a dynamic and immersive experience.

Browne's work creates what could be described as a cultural palimpsest—layers of narrative, image, and symbolism that overlay each other. Each layer offers a new perspective, a different doorway into the story, making it possible to return to his books repeatedly and find something new each time. As readers, we are not merely passive receivers of a story but active 'cultural participants', piecing together the story's meaning from both textual and visual clues, a process that could be described as a uniquely immersive form of literacy (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001). This aligns with Kristeva's view of the reader as an active co-creator of meaning (Kristeva, 1986). Browne's illustrations and narratives thus function as a "mosaic of quotations" in Kristeva's sense, each layered with cultural significance that invites readers into a dialogic reading process.

The blending of visual and textual intertextuality in Browne's work exemplifies how intertextuality, far from being limited to mere literary allusions, can expand the reader's experience by bridging different forms of art and cultural knowledge, creating a reading experience that is intellectually and emotionally resonant. Through his interwoven layers of meaning, Browne creates an immersive narrative that resonates across ages, inviting both children and adults into a shared conversation of cultural understanding. His picturebooks encourage readers not only to read but to interpret, connect, and reflect.

2.2.2 Intratextuality

Intratextuality, a term referring to the connections and references within a single text or across multiple works by the same author, plays a vital role in creating a cohesive and interconnected narrative world (Orr, 2003). This strategy fosters a richer reading experience by encouraging readers to identify recurring themes, characters, and symbols, which contribute to a sense of continuity and familiarity across an author's body of

[4] It is important to clarify that Kristeva coined the term intertextuality, conceptualised it and created a theoretical field for a literary practice as old as literature itself. While intertextuality has always existed, what was lacking was a conscious and systematic approach to its analysis and understanding.

work. In the case of Anthony Browne, intratextuality is not merely a stylistic choice; it is a deliberate technique he uses to layer meaning, and to invite readers to actively engage with and explore his narrative world.

In Browne's picturebooks, this intratextuality can be seen through the recurring use of visual motifs, themes, and characters that reappear across multiple works. This creates an interlinked universe that allows each story to feel part of a larger whole. One notable example is the presence of gorillas, an iconic symbol in Browne's work that holds personal significance to him. Gorillas are central characters in some books while in others they appear subtly in the background or as minor elements. The gorilla's role varies, from representing strength and gentleness to embodying a complex mix of emotions, and its recurring presence invites readers to explore these shifting representations across different narratives.

Browne's use of iconic symbols extends beyond gorillas to include visual cues and repeated symbols that act as "signatures" within his works, such as checkerboard patterns, hats, and items of clothing that often carry symbolic weight. These visual elements serve as "puzzles" or "clues" for readers to piece together. These intratextual references appear for a reason, "as Browne himself says, 'whenever I put anything in like that [an image or reference within a picture] nearly every time, it's there for a purpose, it's there to help to take the story somewhere else, to tell something about the story'" (Arizpe & Styles, 2016: 50). This intentional use of intratextual references transforms Browne's picturebooks into a sophisticated, interconnected network of stories where each work enhances the meaning of others.

In addition, Browne frequently revisits specific themes, such as family dynamics, isolation, and imagination, which resonate differently in each book depending on the context and character perspectives. By revisiting similar themes and visual motifs, Browne establishes continuity across his works and enables readers to approach each story with prior knowledge, thereby uncovering hidden connections and meanings.

This approach aligns with Kristeva's view of texts as interwoven and interconnected entities, with each narrative building upon and transforming others (Kristeva, 1986). Through intratextuality, Browne's work transcends the boundaries of individual stories, allowing readers to actively engage with a larger narrative universe, and transforming his picturebooks into a rich, immersive experience where each reading can reveal new insights and connections across his body of work.

2.2.3 Indeterminacy

Indeterminate meaning, or indeterminacy, refers to the unwritten part of the text, to the 'gaps' in the text which allow or even invite readers to use their imagination and create a multiplicity of possible interpretations. Thus, one text is potentially capable of numerous different realizations because each individual reader will fill in the gaps in their own way (Iser, 1980). To explain this idea, Iser employs the metaphor of the sky during nighttime: "two people gazing at the night sky may both be looking at the same collection of stars, but one will see the image of a plough, and the other will make out a dipper. The 'stars' in a literary work are fixed; the lines that join them are variable" (Iser, 1980:57). The stars stand for the written parts or information contained in the text, and the lines represent the unwritten text that arises interpretations that will vary from reader to reader,

but only within the limits of the written part. The lines are variable and represent the spaces between these elements, where meaning is fluid and open to interpretation. As Iser illustrates, two people might look at the same night sky and see different constellations, much as different readers or even the same reader on a second reading can interpret a text in multiple ways based on the same fixed information.

Moreover, according to Iser (1980), the act of reading involves a dynamic interplay of experiences, including retrospection, anticipation of what comes next, modification of expectations, and the building and breaking of illusions. This process leads to the continuous organisation and reorganisation of the information presented in the text. The text actively engages the reader in constructing hypotheses, guiding them as they fill in the blanks. Some gaps may remain open, while others are addressed later in the narrative, forcing readers to change their initial predictions. Consequently, reading becomes an active and creative interaction between the text and the reader.

In Anthony Browne's picturebooks, this indeterminacy plays a key role in shaping the reader's experience. Browne deliberately leaves certain aspects of his stories unresolved, creating a space for readers to explore and interpret. If these clues remain unresolved, the reader may experience a development of agency and autonomy, as the meaning attributed to these clues lies entirely in their hands. These unresolved elements may be visual clues, ambiguous storylines, or character expressions that, while visually present, do not come with explicit explanations. The reader is invited to "fill in the gaps," leading to a multiplicity of possible interpretations. As Iser (1980) notes, each individual reader will bring their own perspective to the text, drawing on their experiences, imagination, and prior knowledge to complete the meaning. For example, in *Voices in the Park*, Browne leaves certain aspects of the characters' emotional states or relationships open to interpretation. Readers may come away with different readings of the same images based on their personal context or understanding of social issues.

Browne's use of indeterminacy invites a dynamic and layered form of reading, where the text is never fully fixed. On repeated readings, as Iser (1980) suggests, new interpretations and connections may arise, and readers may "see" different constellations in the same text. This ongoing process of discovery is central to the immersive experience Browne offers his audience. The indeterminacy in his works challenges the reader to think critically, to question, and to explore the deeper meanings behind the narrative, thus fostering an active, participatory relationship with the text. Ultimately, it is the interplay between determinate meaning (the fixed text) and indeterminate meaning (the unwritten gaps) that makes Browne's picturebooks such richly rewarding texts, engaging readers of all ages in a continual process of interpretation and re-interpretation.

2.2.4 Variations in the grammar of illustrations

In picturebooks, illustrations possess their own "grammar," a visual language that guides interpretation, much like the rules of written text. This visual grammar includes elements like colour, line, scale, perspective, and layout—each one a powerful tool that conveys feelings, ideas, and atmosphere in a way that words alone might not fully capture. Just as written language relies on semantics and syntax to structure meaning, illustrations

use these visual components to convey complex ideas and emotions that enhance or even alter the accompanying text's meaning (Hunt, 2004). When illustrators make deliberate choices to alter or manipulate the conventional presentation of images, they invite readers to engage more attentively with the narrative, encouraging both emotional and intellectual engagement (Arizpe & Styles, 2016).

In Anthony Browne's picturebooks, visual grammar is used masterfully to enhance the narrative, creating connections that help readers think beyond the words on the page. Browne's use of colour, for instance, often reflects a character's emotions or mental state, signalling shifts in mood that text alone may not fully capture. For example, muted colours may convey a sense of melancholy or alienation, while vibrant hues can indicate warmth or joy. This subtle visual signalling adds depth to the reading experience, as readers come to intuitively associate colours with particular emotional landscapes.

Besides, Browne often manipulates scale and proportion to draw attention to specific elements of his stories. By varying the sizes of objects or characters on the page, he can create a sense of wonder, fear, or importance, inviting readers to consider why certain elements loom large in particular scenes (Hunt, 2004). Such visual decisions encourage readers to ask questions about the significance of these elements and foster a deeper interpretative engagement with the story (Arizpe & Styles, 2016).

Finally, Browne's layout choices—how he arranges images on the page or across a spread—actively shape the reader's experience of time and space within the story. He may, for instance, juxtapose sequential images to suggest movement or transformation, creating a sense of progression that mirrors the character's emotional journey. These visual cues allow for "slow reading," encouraging readers to linger over details and consider the evolving relationships between text and image. The layout, therefore, serves as a guiding framework that directs readers' focus and creates a rhythm that matches the narrative's emotional beats (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001).

2.2.5 Typographic experimentation

Typographic experimentation is a powerful tool in picturebooks, where illustrators and authors creatively manipulate the visual aspects of text—such as typeface, font, size, style, and layout—to deepen or even shift the meaning of the story. This visual play with text invites readers to engage in a more immersive experience, aligning the typography with the narrative's tone, mood, or themes to reinforce key elements of the story. Typography, as Bearne and Wolstencroft (2007) highlight, serves as more than a means of communication; it becomes part of the artistic expression itself, allowing the text to carry its own emotional weight and subtly influencing how readers perceive and interact with the story. When typeface, size, and layout are skilfully combined, typography transforms into a form of art (Matulka, 2008).

Although the terms typeface and font are often used interchangeably, they have distinct meanings that are important to understand in the context of typographic design. Every typeface includes a collection of fonts. For example, Helvetica is a typeface that includes a range of 51 fonts such as Helvetica Bold, Helvetica Light, and Helvetica Regular. To draw an analogy, the typeface can be thought of as a family, while the fonts are the

individual family members. The choice of typeface and font is not merely aesthetic; it carries significant psychological weight and can evoke specific emotions or associations in the reader. For instance, a bold, clean font like Helvetica may convey trustworthiness and strength, while a delicate, cursive font might evoke elegance and sophistication (Lewis, 2021).

Throughout some of his works, Anthony Browne skilfully uses typography to convey the personalities and emotions of his characters, deepening readers' understanding of their inner worlds. By thoughtfully selecting different fonts, weights, and styles, Browne provides visual cues that allow readers to "hear" the unique voices and perspectives of each character. For example, bold or heavy text might suggest strength, anger, or assertiveness, while lighter, more fluid fonts can evoke a sense of playfulness or innocence. This thoughtful typographic layering ensures that the characters' emotions resonate beyond the written words; they are visually reinforced, inviting readers to feel the characters' states of mind as they read. According to Unsworth et al. (2014), these choices in typography—such as weight, curvature, slope, and connectivity—support the meaning-making process by offering visual markers that help readers interpret a character's mood or tone.

Beyond font selection, Browne also experiments with the layout and positioning of text to guide the reader's journey through each story. By modifying text placement, spacing, and alignment, he creates a visually dynamic reading experience that echoes the emotional flow of the narrative. Sentences might be angled, stretched, or widely spaced to convey varying emotions like calmness, tension, or excitement, prompting readers to pace themselves or linger on specific words and ideas.

2.2.6 Fragmentation

Fragmentation is a narrative technique where a story is deliberately broken into parts or segments, often disrupting the linear flow and introducing a sense of disjointedness or discontinuity. This approach can involve fragmented plots, varied character perspectives, or unexpected shifts in time and place, resulting in a narrative that doesn't progress in a straightforward manner. Instead, fragmentation encourages readers to piece together the story's elements and interpret meaning from the gaps or discontinuities that arise. Through this technique, Browne offers readers an opportunity to engage with the narrative on a deeper, more interpretive level, where the story is not simply handed to them but instead requires active engagement to piece together its full meaning (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001).

In many of Browne's picturebooks, the fragmentation of the narrative reflects the emotional or psychological states of the characters, especially in terms of confusion, fear, or self-discovery. When a character's mind is scattered, confused, or processing complex emotions, fragmented storytelling can mirror that internal experience, offering readers insight into the character's perspective in a more visceral way. Instead of merely telling the reader how a character feels, fragmentation can show it, aligning the form of the story with its thematic substance. For instance, when segments of the narrative appear out of sequence, readers may

feel a sense of disorientation or uncertainty, which can mirror the character's experience of confusion or disconnection.

Fragmentation in Browne's work also often appears through the use of non-linear time sequences or disjointed perspectives. Unlike traditional, linear narratives that follow a clear path from beginning to end, fragmented stories leave interpretive space for the reader to fill in. Readers are tasked with piecing together plot points and actively engaging in the story's unfolding (Unsworth et al., 2014).

In addition, fragmentation offers a valuable opportunity to explore different viewpoints, helping readers gain a deeper understanding of how personal experiences shape one's perception of truth. By presenting events from various angles or through multiple characters, the narrative becomes a mosaic, where each perspective adds a unique piece to the larger picture. This technique encourages readers to reflect on the complexity of human experience and how each individual's view can reveal different facets of the same event. In *Voices in the Park*, for example, the narrative is told from four distinct perspectives. The fragmented nature of the story allows each character's voice to come through individually and gives readers a multifaceted view of events.

3. *INTO THE FOREST* AND *VOICES IN THE PARK*

Into the Forest and *Voices in the Park* by Anthony Browne are examples of picturebooks, where text and illustrations work in seamless harmony, each element enhancing the other to convey the narrative. Both can be considered to have a complex word-image relationship because they require more active involvement from readers. The interplay between text and illustration creates a dynamic that invites readers to engage with the story on multiple levels, encouraging repeated readings. Each return to Browne's works reveals new insights and interpretations, enriching the experience and demonstrating the power of the verbal and the visual in his picturebooks.

3.1 *Into the Forest*

Published in 2004, *Into the Forest* is a clear example of how Browne integrates visual and textual strategies to create a unique reading experience. The story revolves around a young boy who is worried about the absence of his father. His mother asks him to visit his ailing grandmother, advising him to take the longer route, but the boy decides instead to venture down the short path through the forest. Along his journey, he encounters iconic characters like Jack from *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Goldilocks, and Hansel and Gretel. Finally, this boy discovers a red coat that empowers him to make a final dash to his grandmother's house. This leads to an unexpected resolution that defies both the narrator's and the reader's expectations.

Into the Forest can also be seen as a "game book", with each page inviting readers to test their attention and perspicacity. In this picturebook, Anthony Browne subtly reinvents the classic *Little Red Riding Hood* tale. While the intertextual references may be more apparent to adults and subtler for children, the narrative encourages readers to draw on their own reading experiences, encyclopaedic and/or literary references and

cultural knowledge, prompting them to interact with the story's layered echoes and reinterpretations (Rodrigues & Pinto, 2024).

Browne introduces a significant twist to *Little Red Riding Hood* by altering the protagonist's gender. Also, he disrupts readers' assumptions about the voice behind the door. Initially, readers may associate it with the wolf in disguise, based on their familiarity with the original story. However, in this version, the "strange" voice belongs to the grandmother, whose peculiar tone is due to her illness. This deliberate play on expectations adds depth to the narrative and encourages readers to reconsider familiar story elements in new and unexpected ways.

3.1.1 Intertextuality

Into the Forest exemplifies Anthony Browne's distinctive style, where rich intertextual possibilities—strongly influenced by painting and literature—draw readers into an intricate, ongoing dialogue with each page turn. Browne creatively reintroduces characters, places, and motifs from *Little Red Riding Hood* tale, blending them seamlessly into his own narrative.

The title *Into the Forest* becomes a critical part of Browne's creative process, providing the first hint at the story's connection to *Little Red Riding Hood*. As David Lodge (1992) explains, a book's title holds great power as it is the first element that readers encounter and one that shapes their initial engagement with the story. Here, *Into the Forest* implies a journey, both literal and metaphorical, and evokes classic fairy tales where forests serve as sites of adventure, danger, and transformation.

As can be seen, the intertextual references begin right from the front cover, where a rich array of visual cues subtly invokes well-known fairy tales. In the background, Snow White's glass coffin is featured, evoking a sense of stillness, which contrasts with the unfolding narrative within the pages. The poisoned apple, a symbol of temptation and danger from *Snow White*, is also woven into the scene. Alongside these, the figure of the Frog Prince appears, hinting at transformation, and the possibility of change—a recurring motif in many fairy tales.

The red front and back endpapers offer a visual thematic frame, with the colour red carrying significant symbolic weight. Traditionally associated with negative, danger-bearing emotions, this choice complements the story's exploration of fear and anxiety, while subtly referencing *Little Red Riding Hood* and deepening the intertextual connections. This colour motif can also be seen in the boy's red shoes, his mother's sweater and the red coat he discovers deep within the forest. The connection to *Little Red Riding Hood* becomes explicit when the boy, feeling cold, stumbles upon a coat. In a passage that directly links him to the classic story, Browne writes:

> I was getting very cold and wished that I'd brought a coat. Suddenly I saw one. It was nice and warm, but as soon as I put it on I began to feel scared. I felt something was following me. I remembered a story that Grandma used to tell me about a bad wolf (Browne, 2004, n.p.).

Here, the red coat becomes a tangible link to the classic tale, while also symbolising the boy's fear of being pursued by something unknown and menacing. Through this subtle but powerful reference, Browne invites readers to consider the boy's journey as not only a physical path through the forest, but also as an exploration of his inner fears and the courage required to confront them. This outer journey through the forest involves an inner, psychological journey towards bravery and self-discovery.

Additionally, as mentioned before, the boy is asked to deliver a cake to his grandmother. His mother, concerned for his safety, warns him against taking the shortcut through the forest. Her caution establishes the forest as a place of potential danger and unknown challenges. However, the boy, eager to return home quickly in case his father comes back, chooses to ignore his mother's advice and ventures into the forest, taking the shorter but riskier route. This narrative of a child journeying through the woods to visit a grandparent closely mirrors the classic tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*, where a young girl faces similar dangers on her way to her grandmother's house. Browne's story draws on this familiar premise, allowing readers to recognise the echoes of *Little Red Riding Hood* in the boy's adventure. However, unlike the passive journey of Little Red Riding Hood, Browne's protagonist actively chooses the forest path. Through this choice, Browne reframes the familiar story, transforming it into a narrative about the child's need to confront and navigate his own fears in the face of uncertainty.

The instances of intertextuality go in crescendo as the boy makes his way to his grandmother's house, encountering characters from familiar fairy tales along the way. First, he meets a boy who offers to swap his cow for the cake. This interaction cleverly alludes to *Jack and the Beanstalk*, immediately signalling a connection to familiar narratives. In Jack's tale, the cow represents both innocence and a crucial turning point—his choice to trade it for magic beans launches him into an extraordinary adventure. Similarly, both Jack and the boy are young characters given a task to accomplish by their mothers, but they both choose to disobey these instructions: Jack by trading the cow for magic beans and the boy by taking the shortcut through the forest. Just as Jack's journey leads him into unknown territories filled with danger and wonder, the boy's decision to enter the forest mirrors that same tension between safety and risk, innocence and experience. Beyond these narrative echoes, Browne embeds visual clues that further deepen the intertextual layers. In the illustration, a beanstalk subtly appears in the bottom right corner, while a giant's club can be seen on the left. These details, quietly tucked into the scene, invite the attentive reader to connect the protagonist's journey with Jack's adventure.

As he continues on his path, he encounters a girl with golden hair who also desires his cake. This is an allusion to *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, which adds another layer to the boy's journey. In the original fairy tale, Goldilocks wanders into the same place, the woods, enters the bears' house without permission, and disrupts their space. This act hints at the concept of boundaries—distinguishing between what is safe and what is forbidden. Just as Goldilocks faces challenges and consequences for her actions, the boy must learn to stand up for himself, make his own choices, and take responsibility for those decisions as he walks through the forest. Also, Browne further enriches this intertextual encounter with visual clues: the image of the three bears

walking in the woods, a house shaped like a bear, and even some tree trunks that resemble a bear's profile. These carefully placed details draw the reader deeper into the narrative, prompting us to consider how the boy's journey mirrors Goldilocks'.

Further along, he sees two children huddling by a fire who are looking for their parents. They represent the characters from *Hansel and Gretel* and this intertextual connection reinforces the theme of the absence of a parental figure. This story revolves around two siblings, Hansel and Gretel, who are abandoned in the woods by their parents due to famine and poverty. To find their way back home, Hansel leaves a trail of breadcrumbs as they venture deeper into the forest. Unfortunately, birds eat the breadcrumbs, leaving them lost and unable to return. Similarly, in *Into the Forest*, the young boy yearns for his father's return. The illustrations accompanying this scene also depict birds, looking for food on the ground, and danger.

Later, after finding and putting on the red coat, a page presents illustrative clues that serve as rich instances of intertextuality. For instance, the inclusion of a pumpkin and a glass slipper directly references *Cinderella*, evoking themes of transformation and magical assistance. A key, which suggests the unlocking of hidden worlds, evokes *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, symbolising curiosity and the adventures that await beyond familiar boundaries. In the background, a tower with a rope alludes to *Rapunzel*, hinting at themes of entrapment, paralleling the boy's own journey through the forest and his desire to find Grandma's house. Additionally, a cat that resembles *Puss in Boots* serves as a reminder of cleverness and resourcefulness, attributes that may come into play as the boy navigates his challenges. Notably, a spinning wheel, symbolising *Sleeping Beauty*, is also present in the illustrations. Lastly, a branch that ends in the shape of a wolf's tail cleverly connects again to *Little Red Riding Hood*.

Interestingly enough, the fairy tale characters woven into Browne's intertextual narrative do not share the same presence. Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Rapunzel, and Cinderella appear only as visual references, with no direct interaction with the protagonist. This is perhaps unsurprising: two are depicted as asleep, one remains locked in a tower, and Cinderella, we might assume, is back home, busy with her chores. Their passive roles are emphasised by the image of Prince Charming on his steed, a visual reminder of the dependency these princesses have on external rescue, unable to alter their circumstances independently. On the contrary, characters like Jack, Goldilocks, and Hansel and Gretel actively engage in decisions that determine their own fates, for better or worse (Bullen & Parsons, 2005). These characters exhibit a degree of agency and resilience that sets them apart from their more passive counterparts. Browne's intertextual choices subtly underscore the contrast between characters whose survival hinges on self-determination and those who await rescue.

Finally, the young boy arrives at his grandmother's house, but something feels amiss. The house is depicted with subtle, wolf-like features, adding an unsettling layer to the scene. This visual cue, combined with the narration, builds suspense:

> I knocked on the door and a voice called out, 'Who's there?' But it didn't really sound like Grandma's voice (…) 'Come in, dear,' the strange voice called. I was terrified. I slowly crept in. There in Grandma's bed was… (Browne, 2004, n.p.).

This passage and its accompanying illustration clearly evoke *Little Red Riding Hood*, setting up the expectation that the wolf is waiting inside, disguised and ready to deceive. Readers, familiar with the classic tale, anticipate danger as the boy enters, mirroring Little Red Riding Hood's famous encounter with the wolf. However, Anthony Browne deftly subverts this expectation, catching both the boy and the readers by surprise with a twist on the classic narrative.

Through all these intertextual —and interartistic— connections, Browne creates a rich tapestry that intertwines the boy's personal journey with the struggles of characters from well-known fairy tales. Each encounter amplifies the themes of disobedience, fear, loss, and the search for safety, illustrating that the journey through the forest is not merely a physical path but also an exploration of the inner landscape of childhood.

3.1.2 Intratextuality

In *Into the Forest*, the setting of the forest creates a homo-authorial dialogue with other works by Anthony Browne, such as *The Tunnel* (1989) and his retelling of *Hansel and Gretel* (2024). Across these stories, the forest emerges as a recurring motif, representing the unknown, a space where characters confront fears, face challenges, and ultimately undergo transformation. This place, both a literal and metaphorical setting for his characters' journeys, serves as a visual and thematic thread across his picturebooks.

In Browne's works, the forest serves as a space of danger, discovery, and personal growth. It functions as a rite of passage and marks the transition from innocence or fear to self-awareness. Characters begin their journeys with fear or uncertainty. However, as they navigate through the woods, they encounter challenges that push them to adapt and evolve. By the time they leave the forest, they emerge transformed—stronger, wiser, or more connected to themselves and others.

Also, Browne's depiction of the forest is visually intricate and contains many elements hidden within the illustrations. As readers look closer, more and more details appear, and readers uncover layers of meaning. For instance, trees often take on the shapes of animals or faces, which evoke a sense of being watched or followed and objects scattered through the forest serve as nods to fairytales and Browne's other works.

Moreover, in *Into the Forest*, the narrative is deeply rooted in the boy's perspective. This child-centric storytelling is a hallmark of Anthony Browne's works. The author focuses on the world through the eyes of a child and invites readers to connect with the innocence, fears, and imagination that characterise childhood. In *Into the Forest*, the young boy's emotions drive the story, with his worry about his father's absence, his fear when walking through the forest, and his happiness when reuniting with his family. Browne's illustrations work in tandem with the text and provide visual cues to the boy's inner world. This child-centric approach is evident across many of Browne's works, which results in a rich intratextual thread that connects *Into the Forest* to other picturebooks such as *The Tunnel* (1989) and *Gorilla* (1983). In *The Tunnel*, the sister's journey into the unknown tunnel mirrors the boy's trek into the forest. Both characters face fears that are amplified by surreal settings, and their bravery leads to emotional growth. The focus on the child's emotional transformation is central to both narratives. Like the boy in *Into the Forest*, Hannah in *Gorilla* experiences the world through

her vivid imagination. Her longing for her father's attention manifests as a magical adventure. Both stories highlight the ways children process complex emotions, such as loneliness and fear, through imaginative journeys.

Another possible connection between *Into the Forest* and other works by Anthony Browne lies in the theme of inattention and/or parental withdrawal or abandonment. In *Into the Forest*, the young boy is unsure of where his father is, and his father's absence looms over the entire narrative. This uncertainty creates a sense of emotional neglect or abandonment that fuels the boy's feelings of anxiety and fear as he ventures into the forest. The absence of the father is not just physical; it is emotionally significant. This theme of parental absence and emotional withdrawal is central to several other works by Browne, where children often cope with feelings of abandonment, neglect, or a lack of attention. In many of these stories, the absence or inattention of a parent figure becomes a driving force in the narrative. As a result, children have to navigate their emotions and often embark on a journey of self-discovery. This can be exemplified in *Gorilla*, where the protagonist experiences neglect from her father, who is distant and inattentive to her emotional needs. Or in *The Tunnel*, where the sister's journey into the tunnel is triggered by her frustration and emotional distance from her brother.

Finally, red clothing is a recurring motif in Anthony Browne's works, which often serves as a symbolic element that enriches the narrative and deepens the emotional impact of the stories. In *Into the Forest*, the red coat worn by the boy is not just a simple article of clothing but a powerful visual symbol. As previously mentioned, it draws a clear allusion to the classic fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood*. It acts as a visual cue that connects his journey to that of the fairy tale character and mirrors the trials faced by Little Red Riding Hood. The red coat appears again in *The Tunnel*, when the little sister leaves the house with her brother. In this case, the red coat draws attention to her role in the story, highlighting her courage as she follows her brother into the dark tunnel. This recurrence of red clothing between the two stories helps to create a web of intratextual connections and acts as a bridge between these two separate narratives.

The red colour extends beyond coats to other items of clothing in Anthony Browne's work and becomes a motif that adds depth and symbolism to his narratives. For instance, in *Voices in the Park* (1998), red appears in the mother's elegant hat and Smudge's jacket. This visually links these characters to strong emotions, such as control in the mother's case and vibrancy in Smudge's personality. The use of red thus becomes a tool for defining character traits and creating a layered narrative. Similarly, in *Gorilla*, the girl's red sweater is a striking visual element that contrasts with the dark, muted tones of her surroundings. The red sweater draws attention to Hannah, emphasising her emotional isolation and yearning for connection, particularly from her father.

It can be said that the consistent use of red in Browne's illustrations serves multiple purposes. On one level, it functions as a visual focal point; it guides the reader's eye to specific characters or elements within a scene. On another level, it carries symbolic weight and represents emotions like passion or danger. In essence, the use of red in clothing or accessories across Browne's picturebooks is far from arbitrary. It acts as a narrative

and emotional thread that binds his stories and encourages readers to explore the shared motifs and deeper meanings behind these visual choices.

3.1.3 Indeterminacy

Through its ambiguous text and evocative illustrations, Browne crafts a tale in *Into the Forest* that resonates differently with each reader. The text is suggestive, with much left unsaid. For instance, readers are not explicitly told why the boy's father has left.

The story opens with the line: “One night I was woken up by a terrible sound” (Browne, 2004, n.p.). This statement is accompanied by an illustration of a lightning-filled sky outside the boy’s bedroom window, which may lead readers to initially interpret the terrible sound as thunder. However, the small but telling clue on the title page—a sticker on the window frame that reads “Come home Dad” (Browne, 2004, n.p.)—introduces a deeper layer of meaning.

The illustration of the boy’s bedroom further enhances this ambiguity. Beside the boy’s bed stands a one-legged toy soldier holding a gun, an allusion to Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Steadfast Tin Soldier.* This figure could symbolise the father’s absence, suggesting not a physical injury but the emotional impact of a family conflict. The "terrible sound" might not be thunder after all, but the noise of a family argument, leaving the soldier (representing the father) emotionally hurt. This interplay of text and image invites readers to question the true nature of the boy’s fear and the tension within the household.

The following morning, the boy’s question to his mother adds another layer of ambiguity. He says: “I asked Mum when he was coming back but she didn’t seem to know” (Browne, 2004, n.p.). While the mother and son share the same physical space in the dining room, the illustration conveys emotional distance. The mother gazes downward in silence, seemingly lost in thought, while the boy directs his attention to an empty chair across from him.

The indeterminate nature of these initial scenes encourages readers to speculate about the family’s backstory: Was the father’s departure due to an argument, work, or something else entirely? The narrative offers no definitive answers and leaves readers to piece together the story through visual and textual clues.

Another significant source of indeterminacy in *Into the Forest* lies in the depiction of the forest and the boy’s encounters with characters from well-known fairy tales. The following passage intensifies this sense of uncertainty: “I love Grandma. She always tells me such fantastic stories” (Browne, 2004, n.p.). This statement, presented before the boy goes into the forest, foreshadows the possibility that his encounters may be a product of his imagination, shaped by the stories his grandmother has shared. This seemingly simple journey is interwoven with visual references to fairy tales that are not explicitly mentioned in the text. These intertextual allusions, such as breadcrumbs (from *Hansel and Gretel*), a red cloak (from *Little Red Riding Hood*), and a beanstalk (from *Jack and the Beanstalk*), challenge readers to question their inclusion. Why are these elements present? What do they signify within the context of the boy’s journey? What is the significance of these references? These fairy-tale references encourage readers to adopt a more complex, nonlinear

approach to the narrative. On one level, readers may view the boy's encounters with these characters as symbolic. For instance, the presence of *Hansel and Gretel* could symbolise the boy's struggle with feelings of abandonment. On another level, these intertextual elements could simply be playful nods to familiar stories, designed to engage readers through recognition.

One last example of indeterminacy in *Into the Forest* is the fluid and shifting nature of the forest itself. The forest, as both a literal and metaphorical space, operates as an environment that changes as the boy's journey progresses. The forest is depicted in shades of grey, in contrast to the colours of the boy's reality. This colour distinction may imply that the forest is a liminal space, a place of transition, uncertainty, and transformation, where the normal rules of time and space are suspended. Also, at various points in the story, the illustrations within the forest take on surreal and ambiguous qualities. For instance, at one moment, the boy encounters what appears to be a distorted or disjointed figure, which could either be a real character or a manifestation of his inner fears and anxieties. The lack of clarity suggests that the forest is a space where the line between reality and imagination becomes blurred. Again, readers need to fill in the gaps themselves based on their perspectives and interpretation.

3.1.4 Variations in the grammar of illustrations

As previously stated, illustrators often alter traditional image presentation to emphasise specific details or ideas, enhancing or even transforming the meaning of the text. Anthony Browne frequently manipulates colour, lines, scale, and layout to create multi-layered visuals that encourage deeper interpretation. The more one engages with his picturebooks, the more layers of symbolism and hidden meanings become apparent.

In *Into the Forest*, Browne employs a thoughtful combination of single-page and double-page spreads, often alternating between the two formats, along with one page made up of small vignettes. This dynamic use of page layout contributes to the rhythm and pacing of the story. The alternating formats serve different narrative purposes: single-page spreads often focus on intimate moments, drawing attention to specific details or emotional beats, while double-page spreads open up the visual field, creating expansive moments that evoke a sense of space, mystery, or wonder. These larger spreads invite the reader to immerse themselves in the setting, emphasising the vastness of the forest and the boy's journey through it. Meanwhile, the small vignettes add a sense of episodic action, focusing on smaller, often more personal moments that enrich the narrative.

As regards the illustrations, the front and back cover feature a greyscale forest, which creates a strange and frightening atmosphere. The forest seems to be a hostile and unwelcoming place due to the twisted, towering trees that evoke a sense of danger. Also, the trees are depicted with sharp, pointed branches that extend in various directions and the absence of leaves gives them a skeletal appearance. This visual strategy effectively sets the mood before the reader opens the book. In contrast to the monochromatic forest, the protagonist is depicted in full colour, drawing immediate attention to him. He is walking along a path into the forest and his small figure is juxtaposed against the towering trees, emphasising his vulnerability and isolation. The back cover provides a brief synopsis of the story, which complements the front cover's visual narrative.

It describes the boy's task of delivering a cake to his grandmother, a clear allusion to *Little Red Riding Hood*. Not only does this synopsis inform the reader about the plot, but also reinforces the intertextual elements that Browne frequently uses.

The opening page depicts the boy being awakened at night by a sound. The choice of nighttime as the setting intensifies the atmosphere of mystery and fear. In literature, night symbolises darkness, the unknown, and the subconscious mind, elements that collectively evoke a sense of mystery and unease. Browne strategically employs this setting to immerse readers in the boy's unsettling experience, drawing them into the emotional landscape of the narrative. Also, the imagery of the soldier with a missing leg, the shadows of the bed cast on the wall, the lightning illuminating the forest through the window, and the bluish hues further contribute to establishing the initial atmosphere of the story.

On the next page, the boy discovers that his father is missing, and his mother is unsure of his return. Browne skilfully portrays the emotional impact of the father's absence on both the boy and his mother through subtle yet powerful visual cues. The empty chair, the lack of food on the plate, and the absence of liquid in both the mother's cup and the boy's glass serve as symbols of the emotional emptiness the characters may be feeling inside because of the void left by the father's absence. Moreover, Browne's portrayal of the mother's eyes as two small dots is particularly striking. By minimising facial features to these subtle details, Browne conveys a profound sense of sadness. Significantly, this scene spans a double-page spread, with the family physically divided by the gutter—the space where the pages meet at the spine. On the right side of the spread, the boy and his mother sit together in quiet reflection, while the empty chair, possibly meant for the father, occupies the left side. This visual separation subtly underscores the emotional distance between them and the father. Last but not least, the use of a blue shade appears again in this scene, which reinforces the melancholic atmosphere and enhances the sense of sadness and depression.

Turning to the following page, four framed illustrations convey how deeply the boy misses his father. The young boy writes "Come home, Dad" on several sheets of paper and places them throughout the house—on the television, the door, the wall, and even the bin. In the first framed image, where he is seen writing these notes, a family photo on the wall shows a visible crack that divides the father from the boy and his mother. This split in the photograph becomes a powerful visual metaphor, symbolically representing the emotional and physical distance between the father and the family. Adding to the tension of this scene, a shadow cast on the wall resembles a threatening hand reaching out, possibly symbolising the boy's fears or a sense of insecurity in his father's absence. These visual details create an emotionally charged atmosphere, in which the shadow can be interpreted as an external manifestation of the boy's internal turmoil.

It is noteworthy that this page stands out for its unique layout. Unlike the other pages, this page incorporates four distinct framed illustrations placed side by side. This change in the layout serves to slow down the pacing of the story and encourages readers to pause on each image and reflect on the boy's actions. The sequence of images—showing him writing, cutting, and pasting the notes around the house—directs the reader's focus entirely on the boy's efforts to communicate his feelings.

As the young boy embarks on his journey, a distinct shift in colour palette occurs, creating a contrast to the main character, who remains in colour while everything else is rendered in black and white. This mirrors the monochromatic tones of the front and back covers. This deliberate choice emphasises the isolation and emotional weight of his experience. However, upon entering his grandmother's house, the illustrations undergo a remarkable transformation. The colour palette brightens considerably, with warm hues, particularly yellow, taking predominance. This shift signifies a change in the atmosphere and mood of the story, and also evokes a sense of comfort, joy, and safety associated with home, which helps create a big contrast to the earlier sombre tones. This vibrant atmosphere invites readers to feel the emotional relief and happiness that the boy experiences as he reunites with his grandmother and father. Notably, the page depicting the father bleeds off the frame, signifying his perceived size and importance in the young boy's eyes.

In addition, the path through the forest often winds across the page in unexpected ways, which encourages readers to physically move their eyes in directions that mimic the twists and turns of the boy's journey. This keeps readers visually engaged and creates a sense of physical movement, as if they are walking alongside the boy, experiencing each twist and turn of the narrative as it unfolds. As the readers' eyes move along the page, they are prompted to pause, reflect, and engage with the unfolding story in a more participatory way. The interaction between the reader and the page echoes the boy's own emotional and physical journey. Browne's thoughtful use of layout, then, becomes an integral part of the narrative, guiding not only the physical movement of the story but also the emotional journey of both the boy and the reader. This use of space and visual flow encourages a deeper, more reflective reading experience, where the layout is not merely decorative, but a key element in the process.

In the final double-page spread, Browne experiments once again with the layout by choosing not to frame the final image of the mother. This choice creates a visual contrast. The previous frames around the illustrations create a sense of separation between the boy's internal world and the outside world. However, the final, unframed image of the mother signifies the boy's return to a place of emotional safety and belonging, which suggests that his journey—both physical and emotional—is coming to an end. It can be said that this shift may serve as a powerful symbol, marking the culmination of the boy's journey and his eventual reunion with his family.

As regards the mother, she is depicted with her arms outstretched, a gesture that conveys warmth and welcome. Her expression is transformed; she is smiling, and her eyes reflect this change. The colours in this illustration are vibrant and lively, further enhancing the sense of happiness and positivity that fills the scene. This visual contrast in terms of colours and frame signifies a resolution of tension and a profound sense of comfort and happiness.

3.1.5 Fragmentation

Although the main sequence of events in *Into the Forest* unfolds chronologically—beginning with the boy's concern for his father, continuing with his journey into the forest, and concluding with his reunion with his

family—Anthony Browne deliberately incorporates elements of fragmentation that disrupt the linearity of the narrative. These fragmented aspects include intertextual and intratextual references to classic fairy tales and other works by the same author, a lack of clear resolution, and a visually disjointed composition. Together, these elements challenge traditional storytelling conventions and create a multi-layered narrative that invites readers to actively interpret its meaning.

One of the most prominent forms of fragmentation lies in its narrative structure. Although the story is framed as a seemingly simple journey, this linear progression is interrupted by encounters with characters and objects from classic fairy tales. These encounters, such as the boy meeting Goldilocks or encountering the breadcrumbs from *Hansel and Gretel*, do not advance the plot in any conventional sense. Instead, they function as symbolic detours or independent scenes that interrupt the flow of the narrative. These interruptions create ambiguity, as the connections between the fairy tale elements and the boy's personal journey are not immediately clear. For instance, when the boy meets the girl with golden hair, the allusion to *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* raises questions about boundaries, trespassing, and the consequences of entering unfamiliar spaces. However, the story provides no explicit explanation for these encounters. This ambiguity contributes to the overall sense of fragmentation and positions the reader as an active participant in the construction of meaning.

Narrative fragmentation in *Into the Forest* is further emphasised by its unresolved ending, which leaves significant tensions unaddressed. While the boy successfully delivers the cake to his grandmother and returns home with both his mother and father, the story does not provide clear answers to the underlying conflicts. The father's unexplained absence, suggested to be a source of distress for the family, remains unresolved. Readers are left questioning the cause of his departure and why his mother appeared unaware of his whereabouts. This uncertainty is particularly striking because the mother explicitly knows about the grandmother's illness, as can be seen in this passage: "The next day Mom asked me to take a cake to Grandma, who was not feeling well" (Browne, 2004, n.p.). This knowledge raises questions about the father's disappearance. If the mother is aware of the grandmother's condition, it is reasonable to wonder whether the father's absence is connected. Did he leave the house to attend to the grandmother, or was his departure the result of an argument? If it was an argument, why does the mother appear so happy at the end when the father returns? These ambiguities challenge readers to piece together the narrative, as no definitive answers are offered.

This lack of closure is characteristic of postmodern storytelling, where ambiguity and open-endedness are used deliberately to disrupt traditional narrative expectations. Browne leaves key questions unanswered and creates a fragmented story that resists simple interpretation. This approach encourages readers to actively engage with the text, filling in the gaps with their own interpretations. The unresolved tensions within the family dynamic, coupled with the emotional ambiguity of the ending, amplify the sense of fragmentation and leave readers with the impression that the story is not truly complete.

In addition to the fragmented narrative, Browne uses visual techniques to disrupt the coherence of the story and create a sense of disconnection. While the text maintains a chronological sequence, the illustrations

often fragment the narrative. A possible example could be the contrast between the gray-toned forest and the colourful elements of the boy's everyday life. The muted, almost monochromatic palette of the forest scenes contrasts with the vivid colours used to depict objects from the boy's home. This visual division emphasises the separation between the boy's familiar reality and the surreal, symbolic space of the forest and also disrupts the visual unity of the story. Readers are continually reminded of the tension between ordinary and extraordinary, safe and dangerous, reality and fantasy.

Beyond narrative and visual fragmentation, *Into the Forest* incorporates symbolic elements that further enhance the story's complexity and disrupt its coherence. As was mentioned previously, the forest itself serves as a symbolic space, representing the unknown and the journey into uncertainty. Also, the objects the boy encounters in the forest function as symbols that carry meanings beyond their immediate context. These symbols are not mere narrative decorations; they invite readers to interpret their broader significance and how they relate to the boy's journey. Each item acts as a metaphor and serves as a fragmented piece of a larger thematic puzzle. For example, the windows that appear both on the title page and at the beginning of the story act as a physical and metaphorical boundary between the boy's home (the known, safe space) and the outside world (the unknown, potentially dangerous space of the forest). Besides, the view of the world beyond is framed through the window, limiting the boy's perspective. This framing may symbolise the boy's own restricted view of the world, which is incomplete or constrained.

All in all, it can be said that fragmentation in *Into the Forest* is not an isolated feature, but a transversal element that interweaves with other key concepts such as inter- and intratextuality, indeterminacy, and experimentation. The inclusion of intertextual references disrupts the flow of the narrative, fragmenting it further by incorporating elements from classic fairy tales that require readers to draw on external knowledge to make connections. Similarly, the ambiguity and unresolved tensions in the story contribute to indeterminacy, leaving gaps in meaning that challenge readers to actively interpret the text. Browne's experimental approach to visual and narrative composition amplifies this fragmentation, as unconventional layouts, symbolic imagery, and visual contrasts break from traditional storytelling conventions. As a result, *Into the Forest* becomes a fragmented picturebook where all these elements converge, creating a multi-layered, dynamic narrative that resists straightforward interpretation and invites readers to engage with its complexity.

3.2 *Voices in the Park*

Voices in the Park (1998), written and illustrated by Anthony Browne, won the 1998 Kurt Maschler Award. In a seemingly simple story about a walk in the park, Anthony Browne explores diverse perspectives on social class and the economic disparities that divide people. This picturebook unfolds through four distinct voices: a mother (First Voice), a father (Second Voice), the mother's son, Charles (Third Voice), and the father's daughter, Smudge (Fourth Voice). While each voice is developed independently, together they weave a narrative that reveals how class, prejudice, control, and friendship shape each character's perspective of the same episode. This story serves as a continuation of Browne's earlier book, *A Walk in the Park* (1977).

The story *Voices in the Park* revolves around a mother and her son, who take their purebred dog to the park, where they encounter a father and his daughter, who have brought along their mixed-breed dog. While the dogs quickly begin playing, the mother keeps her distance from the man. However, Charles and Smudge start a tentative friendship that is cut short when Charles's mother decides to leave.

As Browne himself explains, every detail in this book is intentionally crafted to contribute to the separation and depth of the four narratives: "I tried to use everything in the book… the backgrounds, the seasons of the year, the typeface, the colours, and the style of drawing to help separate the four different stories of the four people who are telling their version of the same day" (Atomic Academia, 2013). *Voices in the Park* is a picturebook that invites diverse readings and interpretations and combines a realistic narrative text with surrealistic imagery.

3.2.1 Intertextuality

Voices in the Park contains numerous intertextual and intervisual references, which encourage readers to reflect on the reasons behind these connections and consider how they contribute to the meaning of the narrative. Through these references, Browne adds layers to the story and invites readers to embark upon a complex dialogue with other artistic forms, including paintings, film characters, and literary figures.

One key intertextual reference in *Voices in the Park* (1998) is to Browne's earlier work, *A Walk in the Park* (1977), which serves as a hypotext or pre-text. It is unusual for an author to revisit and rewrite one of their own works, but Browne takes this approach here, using both books to explore similar themes through new lenses. The core story elements remain consistent across both books, such as some of the character names (Charles, Smudge, Victoria, and Albert) and familiar scenes of children playing on a bandstand, swinging, and dogs chasing each other. However, they differ significantly in how the author portrays characters, structures the narrative, and uses illustrations. In *A Walk in the Park*, Browne presents human characters, with a third-person narrator telling a linear story. The illustrations have a decorative quality in this earlier work. By contrast, *Voices in the Park* presents the perspectives of four zoomorphic characters (with human bodies but ape heads). Also, the illustrations use colours and detailed backgrounds to convey aspects of the characters' personality and emotions.

Browne also incorporates references to prominent artworks to convey deeper meaning. For example, the opening illustration of the First Voice section alludes to Edward Hopper's *Hodgkin's House*, known for its portrayal of a solitary house that evokes themes of loneliness and isolation. Browne draws a subtle parallel between Hopper's lonely house and the character of Charles's mother, who narrates the First Voice. The house in Browne's illustration mirrors her character's reserved and distanced nature, highlighting her class-conscious, and rigid worldview.

Another significant reference is to Edvard Munch's iconic painting *The Scream,* which appears in the images of the section dedicated to the First Voice. The fifth image in this section portrays tree trunks in the park that look as if they were screaming, visually evoking Munch's original work in both form and colour. The

sixth image in the same section shows Charles's mother anxiously searching for her son, which directly recalls Munch's painting. Her face and posture convey a sense of panic and fear, capturing the open-mouthed, wide-eyed horror famously depicted in Munch's painting. This is even made explicit in the following passage: "(…) I saw Charles had disappeared. Oh dear! Where had he gone? You get some frightful types in the park these days!" (Browne, 1998, n.p.). Here, Browne may suggest that her alarm stems not only from the fact that her son is missing, but also from her anxiety about encountering "frightful types" in the park—those she views as socially undesirable or threatening. Her fear, then, is not just about losing her son, but also reflects deeper social prejudices.

Besides, in the second illustration of this section, the Queen of England is portrayed taking a stroll in the park. This allusion appears only within the First Voice, which implies that the presence of the Queen might symbolise Charles's mother's desire for prestige, respectability, and social status.

In the Second Voice, Anthony Browne includes a series of references to well-known paintings and other media, such as advertising or films, that visually communicate the emotions of Smudge's father and allow readers to engage with his inner world through art. On the first illustration, Browne depicts Smudge's father sitting miserably in an armchair. On the opposite page, two portraits—a sad-faced Mona Lisa and a Cavalier—lean against a brick wall and mirror his emotional state. These altered portraits convey his melancholy, showing classic icons of composure and confidence transformed into figures of sorrow and loss. Also, a gorilla dressed as Santa Claus is begging on the street, holding a sign that says: "wife and millions of kids to support" (Browne, 1998, n.p.). This image adds a layer of irony and humour, but also subtly critiques the commercialism and economic pressures surrounding everyday life. This version of Santa Claus, who is usually depicted as a cheerful giver, reflects the character's struggle to meet financial needs. Again, the image of *The Scream* appears in this section, but this time on the front page of Smudge's father's newspaper. This iconic artwork, known for its depiction of intense anguish and existential dread, reflects his frustration, anxiety, and depression over his circumstances, especially due to unemployment. Munch's figure visually communicates the father's internalised fears.

Later, on their way back home, as Smudge's father's mood improves, the tone of the illustrations shifts dramatically. The previously sombre Mona Lisa and Cavalier are now shown dancing together in the street, while Santa Claus, who was earlier begging, also joins the scene dancing. This change in their expressions and actions mirrors the transformation in Smudge's father's emotions, influenced by Smudge's personality. The shift from gloomy portraits to dancing figures underscores the happiness that Smudge brings to him.

In addition to the story's shifting atmosphere, Browne incorporates a visual reference to one of the final scenes from the 1933 film *King Kong*, in which the giant gorilla carries a woman to the top of the Empire State Building. The scene is alluded to by incorporating silhouettes of a gorilla and a woman on the top of a skyscraper. Here, King Kong appears atop a building with his arms outstretched, which may symbolise the newfound strength and confidence the father feels after spending time with his daughter. King Kong represents

his feeling of being "on top of the world," contrasting with the earlier imagery of imposing buildings and towering trees that emphasised his sense of insignificance.

Moreover, in this section, the figure of the magical English nanny, Mary Poppins, is portrayed flying while holding her iconic umbrella, which adds a touch of magic to the scene and creates a contrast with the mundane park setting. The inclusion of Mary Poppins may serve to emphasise the magical and fantastical elements that pervade Browne's illustrations. Her presence invites readers to see the park as a place where the ordinary and the extraordinary coexist. Through this visual cue, Browne draws attention to the imaginative world children create and experience, which often contrasts with the world of the adult characters.

In the section dedicated to the Third Voice, Browne incorporates another subtle reference to Munch's painting *The Scream*. This time through Charles's distorted reflection in the mirror-like surface of a playground slide. The exaggerated perspective of the slide makes it appear much larger than life, which intensifies the sense of anxiety Charles experiences. The illustration is framed from a viewpoint looking up the slide, which distorts the scale and alters readers' perception of size and distance. The slide's bottom support structures extend outside the illustration's frame and create the illusion that the slide is "coming out of the book". This visual allusion emphasises that Charles, like the central figure in *The Scream*, is grappling with an intense inner turmoil that is magnified by his perception of the external world, which he finds intimidating and unfamiliar. This may also suggest Charles's insecurity, fragility, and fear.

For the Third and Fourth Voice, the influence of surrealist painter René Magritte is particularly evident. Anthony Browne has frequently drawn inspiration from Magritte's work; however, this influence has not been without controversy. In an interview, Browne revealed that he was sued by the Magritte estate over what they deemed to be unauthorised reproductions of Magritte's work in *Willy the Dreamer* (1997). As a result, Browne had to remove the books from circulation and pay significant compensation. Although he believed he was introducing children to Magritte's art, the estate insisted on the removal of all references for the new edition. This legal conflict left Browne feeling disheartened (Williams, 2000). Despite these challenges, his homages to surrealism remain a defining feature of his artistic style.

In the Third Voice, doves are used as a recurring symbol to allude to Magritte's paintings such as *Clairvoyance* (1936), *The Therapist* (1937), and *The Large Family* (1963). Doves appear as a hidden symbol on the floor when Charles gazes out of the window, atop a statue's head as the dogs race around, and as a dove-shaped branch that Charles and Smudge climb. Birds, particularly doves, traditionally symbolise freedom and peace, and they may reflect the emotions of the dogs and children as they run and play together. This connection is reinforced in the passage: "The two dogs raced round like old friends" (Browne, 1998, n.p.). Not only does this description apply to the dogs, but also mirrors the friendship between Charles and Smudge. They play as if they have been friends for a long time. Charles's expression changes when he climbs the tree with Smudge; he smiles and he does not seem to be worried, sad, or afraid anymore. In her company, Charles seems free and at peace, unburdened by the constraints of his usual environment. In other words, it can be said that the dove imagery serves as a visual metaphor for the liberation and joy that friendship brings.

In the Fourth Voice, Browne uses fruit motifs like apples, oranges, and pears to reference Magritte's artwork such as *Memory of a Voyage* (1951) and *The Listening Room* (1952). These motifs are cleverly integrated into the visual narrative, and they appear as fruit-shaped tree trunks in the park. They align with the playful and imaginative personality of Smudge and create a contrast between her free-spirited nature and the more rigid and controlled outlooks of the other characters.

3.2.2 Intratextuality

A notable feature of Anthony Browne's picturebooks is his frequent references to his own previously published works, a narrative strategy referred to as intratextuality. Browne's works often link back to each other, creating a rich web of connections that weaves his entire collection of picturebooks into an interconnected continuum.

In *Voices in the Park*, Browne uses visual motifs from previous works to create layers of meaning within the illustrations. One prominent example is the recurring appearance of the mother's red hat, which serves as a subtle symbol throughout the book. The hat appears not only on the mother herself but is scattered across various pages and locations, almost as if it has a life of its own. This red hat can be seen on the title page, the copyright page, and the back cover of the book. It also appears in surprising and playful places, such as on a fencepost, in the shapes of clouds, on lamp posts, in the branches of trees, on a statue, on the mother's scarf at the end of the story, and even on the gateposts leading to Charles's home. The repetition of the mother's hat throughout the illustrations functions as a visual anchor, tying together different scenes and perspectives within the story. The dispersed hats may symbolise her dominance and control over her son Charles. Her hat becomes an omnipresent reminder of her authority, which haunts Charles even when he is physically distant from her. As he walks through the park, he remains metaphorically in her shadow. In fact, many of the trees, clouds, and lampposts are shaped like her hat. Even during a moment of joy with Smudge, such as when they are playing on the slide, the fear of his mother's influence persists. The far lampposts are still shaped like her hat. At the end of both the Third and Fourth Voices, Charles returns home, still haunted by the shadow of his mother and her hat, which continue to loom ahead of him. Charles is depicted looking backward, a posture that suggests he is reflecting on his experiences or longing for something. His posture and facial expression suggest a sense of loss and sadness. The park, a space where he momentarily tasted joy and spontaneity, is now left behind him, replaced once again by the structured environment dictated by his mother.

Interestingly enough, hats are associated with authority, power, and social order. They symbolise thoughts and, when changed, they may indicate a shift in mindset or ideas (Cirlot, 1971). The mother's red hat may symbolise her rigid mindset and desire to assert control, both over her son and her surroundings. Its colour, red, often linked to intensity or dominance, further highlights her authoritative nature. Besides, as hats can represent an individual's aspirations to a particular societal position, the red hat might also reflect her preoccupation with appearances and adherence to upper-class norms. This prop, central to her character, contains all her thoughts, fears, and social identity.

In addition to the mother's red hat, another striking presence in Browne's picturebooks is the recurring image of gorillas. In *Voices in the Park*, the main characters are portrayed as zoomorphic figures with ape-like heads and human bodies, creating an immediate visual connection to Browne's earlier works such as *Gorilla* (1983) and *Willy the Wimp* (1984). In an interview, he admitted his fascination with gorillas and "the contrast they represent – their huge strength and gentleness. They're thought of as being very fierce creatures and they're not" (Flood, 2009). He also revealed that gorillas remind him of his own father, describing them as both big and strong.

Browne's use of anthropomorphic apes serves a dual purpose. On one hand, it blurs the lines between humans and animals because it challenges readers to reconsider rigid distinctions between species. On the other hand, it allows for the exploration of universal human themes such as emotions, social inequalities, and familial relationships. In *Voices in the Park*, this blending of human and animal characteristics extends beyond the central characters. Anthropomorphic elements can be found throughout the illustrations, such as the depiction of the Fountain of Neptune, Cupid and even Santa Claus, all featured as apes.

The gorilla-like characters in *Voices in the Park* are dressed in human clothes, which reveal implicit details about their social standing. Charles and his mother, for instance, are dressed in elegant and refined clothing, suggesting they belong to a well-situated, upper-class family. This is particularly evident in the mother's choice of clothing: she wears a formal coat, scarf, and hat, complemented by a pearl necklace and matching earrings. The formality of her outfit contrasts with the casual nature of a walk in the park. Her decision to dress up formally for such a mundane activity may be perceived by readers as an incongruity. In contrast, Smudge's father is depicted in shabby, casual clothing, signalling a lower-class background. His outfit, including trousers that appear dirty and splattered with paint, reflects his working-class lifestyle and his lack of concern for outward appearances. This difference in clothing between the two families reinforces the themes of class and social inequality explored throughout the book.

Browne's text-within-same-text connections also create a narrative structure that is intratextual in nature. Connections between the characters and their actions, and simultaneity and interdependency of events can be found in the story. For example, in the Second Voice, readers can identify Albert, the playful mongrel, who previously befriended Victoria, the pedigreed dog, in the First Voice. These cross-narrative connections are reinforced visually and verbally. Smudge's father, with his dirt-streaked trousers, is another visual link that helps readers recognise him across sections, tying together his narrative with those of the other characters Another example of intratextuality appears as the characters leave the park. The illustrations subtly tie together three of the narratives through small but meaningful details: in the First Voice, brown-orange leaves are scattered behind Charles's mother as she exits; in the Second Voice, white footprints are left in Smudge's wake; and in the Third Voice, flowers are seen trailing behind Charles and his mother. These visual cues symbolise the impact each character has on their surroundings and highlight the transition from one narrative to the next.

3.2.3 Indeterminacy

Reading *Voices in the Park* requires active participation from readers, as they engage in both the interpretive process and the construction of meaning. The story's indeterminacy pervades the text and illustrations. Through the use of intertextual and intratextual references, visual connections, and multiple narrators or character focalizers, Anthony Browne places readers in the role of co-authors. They must draw on their imagination, prior knowledge, and interpretive skills to fill in the gaps of indeterminacy and make sense of the narrative's layers.

The use of four narrators, each with a distinct voice and perspective, further reinforces indeterminacy. Each character's account is subjective and offers only a partial view of the events in the park. Readers must reconcile these differing perspectives, recognise biases and fill in gaps to understand the broader story. The shifting focalization from one narrator to another also complicates the narrative structure, as events are revisited and reinterpreted through different lenses. Readers must suture the narrative disruptions, connect the stories within stories, and understand the time switches in order to construct a cohesive story.

Voices in the Park is rich with symbols, ranging from straightforward to deeply complex, each contributing to the indeterminacy crafted by Anthony Browne. These symbols invite readers to interpret their meanings. For instance, the scene in which Smudge and Charles are playing on the slide shows a plane with a broken wing on the ground. This broken plane may serve as a powerful symbol of Charles's identity in distress. A plane with damaged wings is incapable of fulfilling its purpose—it cannot fly, explore, or achieve freedom. Similarly, Charles is depicted as constrained, unable to develop a sense of self due to the control of his mother. The broken plane represents his inability to navigate the world on his own terms. However, the presence of Smudge at this moment adds a layer of hope to the symbol. As Charles interacts with Smudge, readers may sense that his brief connection with her provides a glimpse of freedom and individuality—qualities he has been denied. The broken plane, while representing his current state, may also suggest the possibility of repair and flight in the future.

Besides, at the end of the Third Voice, Cupid, the Roman god of love, appears pointing his arrow at Charles. One possible explanation could be that Smudge has left a profound impact on Charles. She may have awakened emotions and experiences he has never encountered before. Cupid's presence suggests the beginning of an emotional transformation, where Charles starts to break free from the rigid, controlled world his mother has constructed for him. This moment symbolises more than just a fleeting connection; it represents the possibility of growth, and the capacity for Charles to form meaningful relationships beyond his mother's shadow. The reciprocal nature of this connection can be found in the final illustration of the Fourth Voice. The image depicts a cup with a handle shaped like half of a heart, which readers may infer it represents the bond formed between Charles and Smudge. Inside the cup is a flower that Charles gave to Smudge, alongside a picture of the dogs running together in the park—a visual reminder of the joy they experienced during their time together. This delicate arrangement suggests that Smudge, too, has been touched by their encounter. Also, the illustration is framed in yellow, a colour that frequently appears during their interactions in the park. Yellow,

often associated with warmth and happiness, reflects the positivity and lightness that their friendship brought into their lives. The use of this colour as a frame suggests that their connection remains a bright and cherished memory.

The ending can be interpreted as unresolved, leaving readers uncertain about whether Charles and Smudge will ever meet again, either in the park or elsewhere. This open-ended conclusion creates a sense of indeterminacy and allows readers to become active participants in the narrative, imagining what might come next for Charles and Smudge. Will Charles find the courage to return to the park despite his mother's control? Will Smudge's vibrant energy continue to influence him? The indeterminacy also reinforces the realism of the narrative. Life rarely offers neatly tied conclusions, and Browne's decision to leave the story open-ended mirrors the uncertainty inherent in real relationships. This ambiguity invites readers of all ages to consider how brief encounters can have lasting impacts, even if the people involved do not meet again.

3.2.4 Variations in the grammar of illustrations

Anthony Browne's illustrations are renowned for their intricate details and visual humour. These visual jokes often divert attention from the narrative and encourage readers to pause, reflect, and explore the illustrations for hidden meanings and connections. This creates a non-linear way of experiencing the book, where readers might jump from one intriguing detail to another, constructing their interpretations along the way. For instance, in *Voices in the Park*, Browne includes a shadow of a crocodile or alligator, subtly hinting at hidden dangers or underlying tensions. Also, there are gorilla profiles in the trees and shrubs that, as was mentioned before, represent a recurring symbol in Browne's works. A bicycle with two riders pedalling in opposite directions, which may symbolise miscommunication or contrasting perspectives. This visual pun complements the book's central theme of differing viewpoints. Two dogs that appear to be attached, perhaps representing the close bond between Smudge and Charles as they become friends despite their different backgrounds. A lamppost transformed into a flower appears in the scene as Smudge and her father walk home, which may stand as a symbol of the transformative power of positivity and joy as the father begins to see the world in a more vibrant light. Also, readers can find a whale in the trees that adds a playful, fantastical touch to the story.

Browne uses colour as a visual tool to reveal and deepen the emotional states and perspectives of the characters. A striking contrast is evident between the Second Voice and the Fourth Voice. In the Second Voice, the father's sadness and apathy are reflected in the muted colour palette. Hues of green dominate, and the overall tone is subdued, which suggests melancholy. This effect is particularly evident in the depiction of the neighbourhood street scene, which is shown twice—once as the father and his daughter Smudge head to the park, and again upon their return. In the first portrayal, the scene is bleak and lifeless, with a sepia-like effect that amplifies the sense of urban decay. The setting appears dirty and depressing. However, this changes dramatically on their way back. After Smudge lifts her father's spirits with her playful and positive energy, the same scene undergoes a transformation. The perception of the city has transformed into a more cheerful and uplifting image. The colours become brighter and more vibrant, which symbolises a shift in the father's

emotional state. The wire fence is removed, the buildings are dotted with red hearts and shining stars, the trees are decorated with delicate Christmas lights, and a broken heart on a brick wall has been fixed. In contrast, the Fourth Voice is characterised by illustrations bursting with vibrant, saturated colours—yellows, greens, reds, and purples dominate the palette. This use of bold, intense hues reflects the lively and carefree nature of Smudge and her interactions with the world.

Moreover, the first illustration of the Third Voice shows Charles standing in a room with muted, cool tones, which reflects his loneliness and boredom. Browne uses a crosshatch texture on the walls and floor that creates a slightly oppressive atmosphere that mirrors Charles's mood. These sharp lines give the impression that the house is a labyrinth where Charles is trapped with no way out. The image is divided into two distinct sections by a wall, which acts as a visual and emotional separation between the characters. Charles, standing in profile with his hands in his pockets, occupies the foreground. In contrast, the dog, Smudge's companion, is visible through the doorway in the background.

Another way of experimenting with the grammar of illustrations extends to his innovative depiction of time and atmosphere within the same scene. One example occurs in the Fourth Voice, where the children and the dogs are playing on a bandstand. In this illustration, Browne juxtaposes day and night: the interior of the bandstand is illuminated as though it is daytime, while the exterior suggests night. This visual dichotomy serves as a metaphor for the timeless nature of joy and play. When individuals are fully immersed in moments of happiness, they lose track of time, as if the boundaries between day and night blur. This is likely the experience of both the children and the dogs, who are depicted as completely absorbed in their shared adventure. Besides, the illuminated interior of the bandstand may symbolise the joy and happiness that the characters bring to the scene. A similar effect can be observed when the children are saying goodbye after Charles' mother calls him away. At this moment, a warm yellow light bathes the two children. This illumination could be interpreted as the radiance of their friendship; when they are together, they shine brightly. Smudge, in particular, is depicted as a source of this contagious brightness. Her vibrant personality and energy seem to "light up" everyone around her, from her father to Charles.

In addition, there is a juxtaposition of the weather in the Third Voice. Browne uses the visual element of a lamppost to divide the scene between Charles and Smudge, as they sit on a bench. On Charles' side of the lamppost, the picture is framed, the background is cloudy and trees are devoid of leaves. His posture and expression suggest worry or sadness. On Smudge's side, the picture is not framed, the background is sunny and full of life. The trees are blossoming, a vibrant flower grows nearby, and her face radiates with a smile. Browne's choice to juxtapose two opposing weather conditions—cloudy and sunny, barren and blossoming—within a single scene underscores the thematic focus on contrasting viewpoints and emotional states. The simultaneous depiction of two different seasons may symbolise the divergent ways in which the same experience is perceived by the two children. Charles, who is weighed down by his worries and the influence of his rigid upbringing, views the world through a bleak lens. Meanwhile, Smudge, with her optimistic nature,

transforms her surroundings into a vibrant and inviting space. Also, this visual division may reflect Charles's gender assumptions that still separate him from Smudge, assumptions likely inherited from his mother.

Framing is another prominent feature throughout the story. Clean, crisp lines are frequently used to frame the illustrations, particularly in the sections of the First and Third Voices. This choice may be to reflect the controlled, often rigid perspectives of these characters. However, Browne skillfully breaks these rigid frames in moments of heightened emotion or energy and creates a three-dimensional effect where characters or objects protrude beyond the borders. For instance, in the First Voice, the mother's fear is so intense that her yelling makes the trees shed their leaves and burst out of the frame. Similarly, in the Fourth Voice, the mother's iconic red hat is depicted flying upward as her anger visibly "leaks" beyond the frame's boundaries. These moments suggest that strong emotions cannot be confined within the structure of the illustration.

Interestingly, the framing in Charles' section (the Third Voice) undergoes significant changes when he begins playing with Smudge. At the beginning, Charles is a silent boy without a voice of his own and whose perception of the world is framed by what his mother teaches him to see. However, as he grows closer to Smudge, Charles's perception begins to change. The rigid, straight lines that typically encapsulate his world transform into softer, rounded edges when the climbing frame becomes the illustration's frame. This shift may visually represent the influence of Smudge's carefree and playful personality, which helps Charles step out of his structured, reserved environment. When they climb trees together, the frame itself becomes irregular, which further emphasises the freedom and joy that Smudge brings into his life. However, this shift is only temporary because when Charles walks home with his mother, the illustration depicts tree trunks surrounded by bars. This acts as a visual metaphor for the controlled, rigid lives they lead. The bars reinforce the theme of constraint and may symbolise how their fixed, structured mindset traps them in a narrow view of reality that prevents them from experiencing the freedom and joy that Smudge brought into Charles's life earlier.

In other instances, Browne employs the natural edges of the page to frame scenes and creates an organic boundary that differs from the structured frames found in other parts of the book. This technique allows the illustrations to expand beyond the confines of strict borders and invites readers to immerse themselves in the world of the story. For example, scenes depicting the park or the larger urban setting often use the page's edges as natural frames. This creates a panoramic view that contrasts with the more tightly framed illustrations tied to specific characters' perspectives. This approach serves to contextualise the characters within their environment and highlight the thematic contrasts in the book—moments of isolation versus connection, rigidity versus freedom, and control versus spontaneity.

Finally, Browne incorporates an optical illusion known as Rubin's Vase in his depiction of the plaster pillars in the Third Voice. This illusion, also referred to as Rubin's Face or the Figure-Ground Vase, was developed by Danish psychologist Edgar Rubin in 1915. The illustration is notable for its alternating visual elements, where the viewer can either see a vase or two faces in profile, depending on their focus. The duality of this optical illusion, where both interpretations coexist in the same image, reflects the complex layers of meaning and perception that Browne often weaves into his narratives. Also, the use of Rubin's Vase may

symbolise the varied and contrasting viewpoints of the characters, whose individual perceptions shape the reality they experience. Just as the optical illusion can shift between two different images depending on one's perception, the characters in the story see their world differently, filtered through their unique experiences and attitudes.

3.2.5 Typographic experimentation

Anthony Browne has cleverly demonstrated a thoughtful approach to typographic experimentation throughout the whole story *Voices in the Park*. Different font styles have been used to convey each character's personality and voice. Each character is assigned a unique font that visually complements their narrative tone, which offers readers an immediate glimpse into their personality and worldview even before reading the words. This typographic experimentation begins on the front cover and title page, where the title is rendered in a mix of fonts that capture the varied perspectives in the story. On the back cover, this idea is extended through four distinct statements, each presented in a unique font matching the voice of the character speaking. This deliberate layering of text and design exemplifies Browne's intricate approach, where every element—visual and verbal—serves a purpose.

For Charles's mother, the First Voice, Browne's choice of a classic serif font, akin to Times New Roman, is deliberate and insightful. This typeface, renowned for its formal and refined appearance, is closely associated with tradition, authority, and professionalism. Its frequent use in official documents, academic papers, and published works has established its reputation as one of the most dependable and trustworthy fonts (Kaspar et al., 2015; Tantillo, Lorenzo-Aiss, & Mathisen, 1995). The elegance and structure of this font align seamlessly with the mother's personality. By employing a typeface that conveys sophistication and high status, Browne reinforces the character's values and emphasises her preoccupation with appearances and adherence to societal expectations. Besides, the serif font further highlights the mother's rigidity and structured approach to life. Serif fonts are often associated with a scientific and authoritative tone, which mirrors her commanding behaviour and her inclination to judge others. Browne's typographic choice does more than represent her personality; it shapes the reader's understanding of her as a character deeply concerned with societal norms and order. Her use of dismissive language, paired with the authoritative font, creates a character that readers perceive as controlling and emotionally distant, framing her as an individual who prioritises status and structure over emotional connection.

In contrast to Charles's mother, Smudge's father, the Second Voice, is represented by a bold, rounded font resembling Arial Bold. This font is less formal, with softened edges and heavier strokes, not as rigid as the ones used for the mother. The informality of the bold text, along with the type of grammar of the sentences, may indicate that he is a working-class person. The roundedness of the font softens its boldness, hinting at the warmth and care he shows toward his daughter, Smudge. Also, the boldness of the font makes one envision that this character may have a deep, rough voice.

Charles, the Third Voice, is represented by a font with thin, delicate strokes that are barely visible on the page. The lightness of this typeface creates a sense of fragility and vulnerability. “Typefaces that are lighter in weight (in width and stroke thickness) are seen as delicate, gentle, and feminine” (Brumberger, 2003: 208). This delicacy stands in contrast to the bold, assertive font used for his mother. This difference may symbolise the power imbalance in their relationship and his struggle to have his own voice. The choice of a thin serif font for Charles also subtly connects him to his mother, suggesting that his perception of the world is shaped by her influence. However, the lighter weight of his font emphasises the disparity between their personalities, with his faint, fragile typeface symbolising his insecurity and emotional vulnerability.

Finally, Smudge, the Fourth Voice, is depicted with a bold, playful font. These rounded, informal letters suggest an energetic, spirited character who is confident and carefree. Like her father’s font, hers is also bold, but it has a playful quality that conveys her youthful joy and friendliness. This font choice encapsulates her personality perfectly—bright, open, and expressive—helping readers immediately sense her lively and uninhibited spirit, whose perspective brings a sense of brightness and warmth to the narrative. The playful typography of Smudge’s voice also aligns with her approach to life, which contrasts sharply with Charles’s reserved nature and his mother’s rigidity.

In *Voices in the Park*, the layout of the text remains uniform across the story, with consistent placement and spacing that allow the narrative to flow seamlessly from one voice to another. Rather than relying on changes in text placement to reflect shifts in emotion or mood, Browne uses the interplay between text and illustrations to convey the characters’ personalities and perspectives. This consistency in layout ensures that the reader’s focus remains on the narrative and visual elements rather than being distracted by dramatic changes in text arrangement. This design choice allows readers to focus on the narrative voices and the richness of the illustrations, which are central to the story’s impact. The collaboration between text and image creates an immersive experience, where the uniform layout serves as a neutral backdrop for the characters’ distinct perspectives, and the richly detailed artwork that brings their world to life.

3.2.6 Fragmentation

The structure of *Voices in the Park* employs a "stories within stories" framework as its primary narrative framing device. This approach allows the book to layer multiple perspectives, presenting a multifaceted account of the same sequence of events. The picturebook's structure exemplifies what McCallum describes as "multistranded narratives," which are defined as narratives composed of “two or more interconnected strands, distinguished by shifts in temporal and spatial relationships or changes in narrative point of view” (1996: 406). In *Voices in the Park*, each of the four main characters recounts their version of the same outing to the park. However, each character’s version of the events is depicted as occurring at a different time of year. According to Doonan, the “settings function as a symbolic reflection of attitudes of each character” (1999: 48). This means that there is a connection between the external environment and the internal experiences of the characters; the outside world is a reflection of the inside world of the characters. For example, the First Voice takes place in

what seems to be an autumnal setting that mirrors the cold, controlling attitude of the mother. In contrast, the Fourth Voice, narrated by Smudge, is set in a vibrant, spring-like environment full of life and energy, which reflects her optimistic and playful personality. These seasonal shifts do not align in a chronological or realistic timeline, but rather serve as symbolic representations of the characters' perspectives and emotional worlds.

These differences in perspective among the four characters are also marked by the distinct language used in their narratives. Charles's mother, for example, employs dismissive and judgmental expressions that reveal her prejudice and class-conscious mindset. She refers to Smudge's dog as a "scruffy mongrel" and a "horrible thing". Similarly, she describes Smudge as a "rough-looking child," reducing her vibrant personality to mere outward appearances. Her disapproval extends to Smudge's father, whom she labels as "some frightful type," a phrase rooted in stereotypes. Besides, there is a notable absence of dialogue between the mother and her son, which reveals the emotional distance in their relationship: "We walked home in silence" (Browne, 1998, n.p.). This lack of verbal interaction between the characters emphasises their disconnect. When she does speak to Charles, it is not to engage in conversation or connect emotionally, but rather to issue commands. For instance, when she notices Charles playing with Smudge, she abruptly orders: "Charles, come here. At once!" (Browne, 1998, n.p.) in juxtaposition to her rather polite tone that she uses to refer to their dog: "And come here please, Victoria" (Browne, 1998, n.p.). In an ironic reversal of status, the mother expresses harshness towards her son and politeness towards the dog. She fails to see that her son is enjoying the moment with Smudge, interrupting his joy and cutting short his opportunity to form a connection with another child. This lack of dialogue, combined with her dismissive language, suggests a hierarchical dynamic between mother and son. The relationship appears devoid of warmth or mutual understanding.

On the contrary, Smudge's father's language is informal and conversational, characterised by the use of contractions and colloquial expressions. For instance, when describing the dog's boundless energy, he remarks "I wish I had half the energy he's got" (Browne, 1998, n.p.). This casual tone creates a sense of authenticity and grounds his perspective in everyday, unpretentious experiences. His comment, connected to observing the dog running and playing freely in the park, subtly conveys a sense of admiration for the dog's vitality, while also implying his own weariness or struggles. Another notable moment is when Smudge's father is shown reading a newspaper and searching for a job. He reflects on this task with a mix of realism and optimism, stating "I know it's a waste of time really, but you've got to have a bit of hope, haven't you?" (Browne, 1998, n.p.). This line captures his resigned acceptance of the challenges he faces and reveals a glimmer of determination to remain hopeful. The use of conversational language, including the rhetorical question at the end, invites readers into his thought process and makes his reflections feel genuine and heartfelt. This section concludes with Smudge and her father walking home together, chatting easily. This serves as a sharp contrast to the cold and disconnected dynamic of the other family, where Charles and his mother walk home in silence.

At the beginning, Charles's discourse is somewhat shaped by his mother's voice. When he speaks, it is not entirely his own voice that we hear, but rather his mother's, with all her biases and judgments. Initially, he

is not very happy when Smudge approaches him because he says "it was a girl, unfortunately, but I went anyway" (Browne, 1998, n.p.). This line may imply some gender assumptions he has probably inherited. However, as the story progresses, Charles's own voice begins to emerge, contradicting his mother's negative attitude toward Smudge and her dog. Charles indirectly challenges his mother's view when he observes "the two dogs raced round like old friends" (Browne, 1998, n.p.), which serves to widen the gap between the mother and the readers due to her judgmental attitude and lack of credibility. In addition, while the mother describes Smudge as "a rough-looking child", Charles describes her as "brilliant" and "quite nice" (Browne, 1998, n.p.). The discourse that Charles constructs is more inclusive and empathetic than the dismissive and arrogant discourse of his mother.

Smudge's language is informal, unfiltered and spontaneous. Although she does not directly engage in conversation with Charles' mother, she subtly critiques her behaviour and attitude. She refers to her as a "silly twit" (Browne, 1998, n.p.) for preventing the dogs from playing together. Besides, Smudge clearly perceives what Charles's mother does not see. While the mother remains oblivious to her son's inner turmoil, Smudge clearly notices Charles's sadness and lack of self-confidence. At the end of her narrative, Smudge states "Then his mum called him, and he had to go. He looked sad" (Browne, 1998, n.p.). This statement shows the emotional gap between Charles and his mother. Ironically, while the mother is focused on superficial judgments and control, she fails to recognise her son's emotional state and his need for connection. In contrast, Smudge's sensitivity allows her to understand Charles's unspoken feelings.

Besides, it is important to point out that the storyline of each vignette begins at a different point in the story, which introduces narrative discontinuities. For instance, Charles's mother begins her narration when she, Charles, and their dog leave their house. In contrast, Smudge's father begins his story while sitting alone in an armchair, emphasising his initial sense of frustration and discontent. His narrative offers a more introspective tone. Charles's story starts while he is alone in the house, highlighting his feelings of boredom and detachment. This beginning sets the stage for his reserved and somewhat melancholic perspective. Smudge's story, on the other hand, opens with her, her father, and their dog entering the gates of the park.

The four distinct "voices" in the story can theoretically be read in any order. However, altering the sequence of these narratives significantly influences how readers interpret the events and relationships within the story. Each voice is a self-contained narrative that offers an individual perspective on the same visit to the park. Yet, when combined, these narratives interweave to form a more comprehensive and multifaceted account of the events. This structure exemplifies the concept of a "nonlinear text," where the progression of the story is not bound by traditional chronological or linear storytelling conventions.

Browne includes visual elements such as motifs, intertextual references, and intratextual connections. These visual cues can disrupt the flow of the narrative, pulling readers' attention away from the linear progression of the text and encouraging them to explore the relationships between the images and the story. This interplay of illustrations and text further enhances the book's non-linearity. Browne's artwork often includes interruptions that invite readers to pause, reinterpret, or connect disparate elements of the story. For

instance, the same scene might be depicted differently in separate voices, with changes in colour, tone, or perspective reflecting the emotional state of the narrator. These visual shifts disrupt the conventional flow of the narrative, reinforcing the nonlinear experience and requiring readers to engage actively with the text.

4. PRIMARY CLASSROOM WORK

Working in the classroom is no easy task; it requires teachers to possess the skills, abilities, and expertise necessary to deliver high-quality education. All the previous analysis of the present paper aims to provide teachers with an enhanced understanding of picturebooks by exploring their diverse formats, genres, and peritextual features. Picturebooks are complex art forms, and appreciating their richness allows teachers to select texts that align effectively with their educational objectives and the diverse needs of their students. Moreover, by delving into the interplay of illustrations and textual elements, teachers can gain valuable insights into how these components work together to convey meaning. This knowledge equips them to guide students in analysing visual cues, fostering critical thinking and a deeper engagement with the narrative.

It is essential to emphasise that the more teachers know about literary texts, their authors, and their main characteristics, the more prepared they will feel when designing and implementing a didactic sequence. This comprehensive understanding gives educators the confidence to adapt activities and teaching approaches to suit their students' needs. Also, it ensures that teachers can fully exploit the educational potential of picturebooks and can create an enriched classroom experience where students actively engage with the material.

Into the Forest and *Voices in the Park* are picturebooks that demand significant preparation and analysis from teachers. Anthony Browne's strategies require educators to familiarise themselves with his techniques to effectively guide students in exploring the layers of meaning embedded in his works. Understanding Browne's intertextual and intratextual references, visual symbolism, and narrative complexity allows teachers to scaffold students' learning processes. Also, it enables teachers to delve deeper into the texts and carry out more intensive and meaningful classroom work with their learners. By thoroughly studying these picturebooks, educators can design thoughtful activities that enhance language skills as well as nurture creativity, critical thinking, and aesthetic appreciation in their students.

4.1 Introducing the approach - Literature in Action: A 4-Step Model

The 4-Step Model developed by Griselda Beacon (2024) will be used to work with the picturebooks *Into the Forest* and *Voices in the Park*. The first stage, known as **the Hook**, is designed to create an entry point into the story, to capture the learners' attention and spark their curiosity right from the beginning. At this stage, teachers should prepare both the physical and social environment, aiming to eliminate distractions and create a calm, welcoming atmosphere. This may include moving to a different place (for instance, the library or the reading corner in the classroom), adjusting seating, or dimming lights. The objective is to ensure that learners are comfortable and ready to engage with the story (Wright, 1995; Ellis & Mourão, 2021). Once the environment

is set, teachers can employ various strategies, such as asking thought-provoking questions, using a mystery box or magic hat containing objects related to the story, or presenting images of the main characters. These activities encourage learners to imagine, guess, explore, and inquire, setting the stage for deeper engagement with the narrative. Also, this moment serves as an ideal opportunity to activate prior knowledge, enabling students to make personal connections with the story. By drawing on their own experiences, learners can approach the text with greater insight and confidence.

The second stage, called **Literature & Storytelling**, involves the reading or telling of the story in an engaging and expressive way. Teachers should use a variety of techniques, being mindful of how they incorporate their body, gestures, facial expressions, actions, and posture. Equally important is the use of eye contact and gaze, which help establish a connection with the audience. Vocal expression also plays a key role, with careful attention to variations in stress, intonation, tone, volume, pace, and pauses (Ellis & Mourão, 2021). In addition, this stage includes book talk, where teachers can pause, make comments, and invite students to observe, reflect, and share their thoughts. Teachers can also direct students' attention to the architecture of the book, including peritexts, images, flaps, pop-ups, and endpapers.

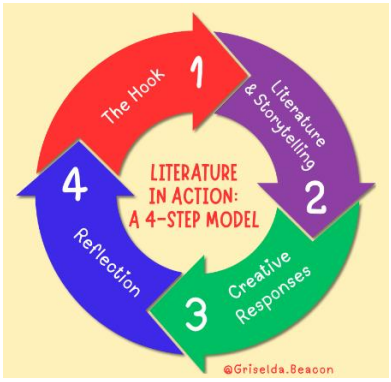
Creative responses form the third stage of this 4-step model. The goal is to move beyond traditional, mechanical tasks like answering reading comprehension questions, filling in the gaps, or completing sentences with the correct tense. Instead, teachers should incorporate activities that stimulate creativity and encourage collaboration, which allows students to inspire one another and explore diverse perspectives. Some examples of creative responses include Arts and Crafts, textual interventions, dramatizations, and dancing. This moment aims to create an environment where students feel free to experiment, share ideas, and approach learning in a more dynamic and enjoyable way. Students who learn to think creatively are better prepared for the challenges they may face in their careers and personal lives. By fostering creativity, teachers are equipping students with skills that go beyond the classroom, helping them to navigate and succeed in an increasingly complex world (Robinson & Aronica, 2016).

Also, I would add that offering a variety of activities ensures that each student can connect with the material in a way that resonates with them. In other words, providing learners with choices among diverse creative responses allows them to explore and express their understanding in ways that suit their individual learning styles. This flexible approach encourages students to take ownership of their learning. For instance, some students may benefit from hands-on activities that engage their kinaesthetic learning style, while others may thrive with visual aids or group discussions that cater to their interpersonal intelligence.

The last stage, **Reflection**, encourages students to reflect on their work and learning experience. This can be done through various methods, such as written questions, exit tickets, or oral discussions. The goal is to create a space where students can express their thoughts on what they have learned, what they enjoyed, and what they remember most vividly from the story. Reflection allows them to consolidate their understanding, identify areas for improvement, and connect the learning to their own experiences. It also provides an opportunity for teachers to gain insight into students' thought processes and plan their future lessons. In other

words, this reflective practice supports metacognition, and invites learners to take ownership of their learning, building confidence and a deeper awareness of their individual process.

Last but not least, this stage should also include the teacher's reflections, a vital component of professional growth. Questions such as "Have the lessons been meaningful for my students?" and "What went well in this lesson, and why?" encourage teachers to critically evaluate their instructional strategies and their impact on student learning. Similarly, reflecting on the challenges or problems experienced helps identify areas for improvement and potential solutions. Teachers can also consider whether the lessons were sufficiently student-centred.



Beacon, G. (2024). Literature in Action: A 4-step model

4.2 *Into the Forest*: A didactic sequence

This didactic sequence is designed for a group of five graders with an A2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The students attend a private school in the Balvanera neighbourhood (CABA) and have nine periods of English per week. The sequence is planned for the first part of the school year, with approximately 20 students per class and a duration of four lessons.

4.2.1 Anticipated learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- interpret visual and textual elements in *Into the Forest.*
- develop listening skills.
- enhance writing skills by creating zines, dialogues, and completing graphic organisers.
- foster creativity and fine motor skills through arts and crafts activities.
- build teamwork and collaboration through group-based tasks and presentations.
- develop artistic and aesthetic awareness.
- develop summarisation skills by condensing story elements into structured formats.
- express personal reflections and interpretations of the story creatively.
- improve oral communication and confidence.

- recognise and understand basic elements of classical narrative structure, such as characters, setting, plot, and symbols.

4.2.2 Procedure

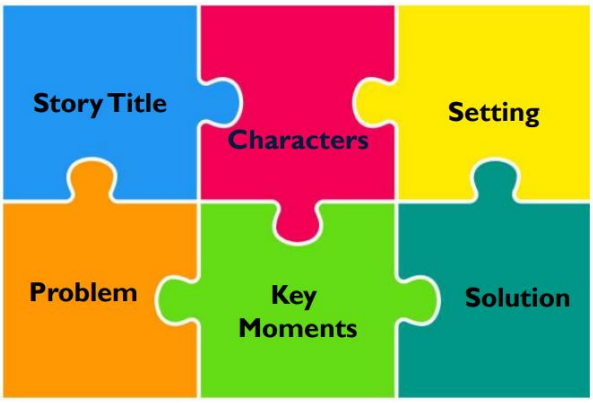
4.2.2.1 The Hook

To create a focused and inviting environment for the story, the teacher will lead students to the school library, where they will settle onto pillows to help them feel comfortable and attentive. The teacher will introduce the session by announcing, "Today is story time!"

To ignite interest and curiosity, and also to activate background knowledge, the teacher will introduce a 'magic hat' filled with objects from well-known fairy tales, such as breadcrumbs from *Hansel and Gretel*, a red coat from *Little Red Riding Hood*, beans from *Jack and the Beanstalk*, three teddy bears from *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, an apple from *Snow White*, and a slipper from *Cinderella*. In turns, students will draw an object, name it, and identify the story it belongs to. Following this, the class will brainstorm other fairy tales they know, and the teacher will write the answers on the board.

The teacher will introduce the title of the picturebook, *Into the Forest*, and ask students to think about and share which fairy tales take place in a forest. This discussion invites students to connect the title to familiar stories. As students suggest different tales, the teacher will guide them to explore why forests are often chosen as settings in fairy tales.

Then students will work in groups of four/five and each group will be in charge of a fairy tale (*Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, Goldilocks and the Three Bears,* and *Hansel and Gretel).* The teacher will give them the story, and they will read it and complete a big story puzzle with information about the characters, setting, problem, key moments, and solution. Then they will present it to their classmates, who will take notes about the story. After all the presentations, students will reflect on how they felt while presenting and identify areas for improvement for future activities.



Beacon, G. (2024). Retelling stories: Story puzzle

4.2.2.2 Literature & Storytelling

The teacher will show students the front and back covers of the picturebook, inviting them to describe what they see. The teacher will then guide students' attention to the contrasting colours and the subtle visual clues (such as Snow White's glass coffin, the poisoned apple from *Snow White*, and the Frog Prince) embedded within the illustrations, encouraging them to think about what these details might hint at in terms of the story's themes or mood. To prompt predictions, the teacher will ask students what they think the boy might be carrying in his basket and whether they remember a story involving a character walking through the forest with a basket.

The teacher will tell students to watch for elements from previously discussed fairy tales as she reads the story. Since the illustrations include visual cues referencing additional fairy tales that were not explored earlier, the teacher will highlight these connections. If students are unfamiliar with a particular story, she will provide a brief explanation to clarify the reference.

The teacher will read the story using expressive techniques, pausing at key moments to allow students to observe, make comments, ask questions, check predictions and experience the magic of Anthony Browne's illustrations.

4.2.2.3 Creative Responses

After reading the story, students are invited to choose one of the following creative response activities that allow them to interpret and engage with the story on a deeper level. The activities vary in format, from written expression to visual and kinaesthetic forms of response. By offering these choices, students have the opportunity to creatively synthesise their understanding, experiment with different modes of expression, and collaborate with classmates.

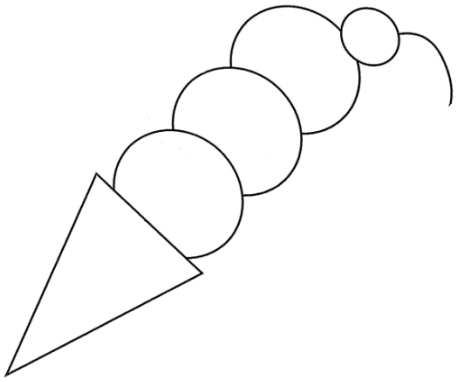
- **Zines**: Creating zines, or mini-magazines, encourages students to express their understanding of the story through a visual summary. This activity fosters artistic expression and summarisation skills. Students can either follow a template provided by the teacher or create a fully original design.

  First, the teacher will introduce the concept of zines and display examples to inspire students. Key features of a zine will be discussed, such as the cover, illustrations, and layout. Then the teacher will provide a template for guidance or encourage students to create their own design. In groups, students will brainstorm ideas and sketch a draft. Once the draft has been checked, students will create their zines, using a mix of text, drawings, and collage. Finally, the zines will be displayed in the classroom as part of an *Into the Forest* showcase.

Durán, K. (2024). Fanzines: Template

- **A new encounter**: This activity fosters imagination and narrative skills while encouraging students to build connections between stories. Students will expand the story by imagining a new encounter between the boy and a character from a different fairy tale. In groups, students will brainstorm possible encounters between the boy and a fairy tale character. They will imagine the dialogue, and the type of interaction (e.g., friendly, humorous, or challenging). Then, students will create illustrations depicting the encounter, including both the boy and the fairy tale character, and will write the dialogue. Following this, students will rehearse their scene, assigning roles, practising lines, and integrating props or gestures. Finally, the groups will present their scenes to the class, dramatising their new encounter.

- **Triple scoop**: Using the "Triple Scoop" graphic organiser, students will represent key elements of the story in a structured, visual format. The organiser features an ice cream cone structure, with each scoop representing the beginning, middle, and end of the story. The cone itself holds descriptions of the main characters, while the cherry on top describes the setting. This activity supports comprehension by encouraging students to identify and summarise essential details of the plot and characters in a creative format. First, the teacher will explain the structure of the graphic organiser and students will copy it on a blank poster. Then they will work in groups and review the story to identify its key elements. Students will fill in their graphic organisers with textual and visual elements. Following this, they will decorate their ice cream cones to make them visually appealing. Finally, they will share their completed Triple Scoop organisers with the class and explain their choices and interpretations.



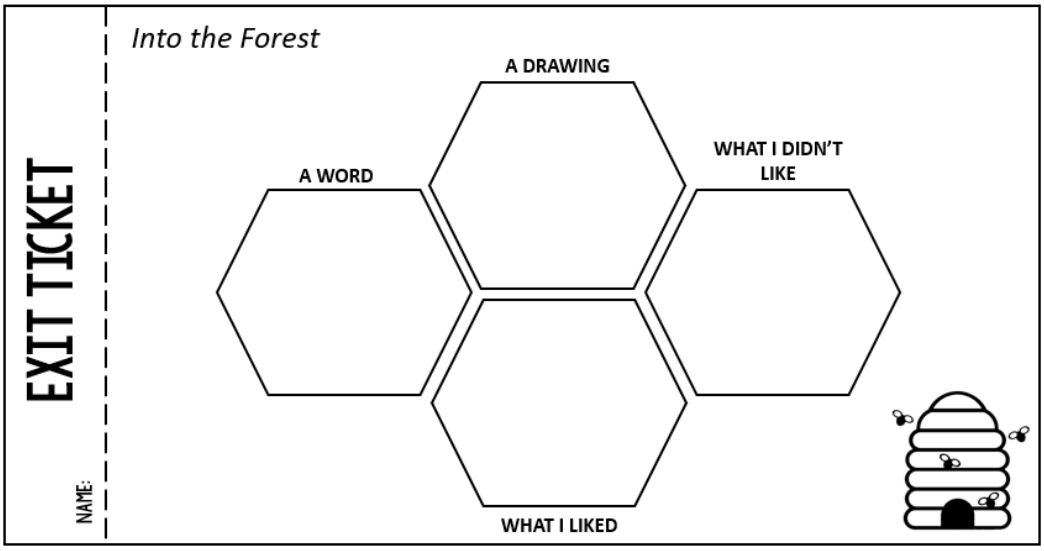
Adapted (and expanded) from

Charlesworth, L. (2001). *100 Awesome Writing Prompts to Use with Any Book!*

4.2.2.4 Reflection

To wrap up the lesson, students will engage in a reflection activity that encourages them to consider their work and learning journey throughout the *Into the Forest* sequence. Each student will complete an "exit ticket" where they share both what they enjoyed and what they found challenging or less enjoyable about the activities. They will also be invited to include a small drawing that captures a memorable moment or feeling from the sequence, alongside a word that encapsulates their personal learning process. For those who feel comfortable, there will be an opportunity to share their reflections with the class. The objective of this creative reflection is that students can leave with a sense of accomplishment, feeling that their voices and perspectives have been both valued and heard. Also, the teacher will reflect on the lessons, taking into account the following questions:

- Have the lessons been meaningful for my students?
- What went well in this lesson? Why?
- What challenges or problems have I experienced?
- Were the lessons student-centred?
- What could I have done differently?



Adapted from huguettebarrera (2019). *Exit tickets.*

4.3 *Voices in the Park*: A didactic sequence

This didactic sequence is designed for the same group of fifth graders for the second part of the school year. Since they will have worked with Anthony Browne during the first half of the year, learners will already be familiar with the author and his visual and textual strategies. The sequence consists of three lessons.

4.3.1 Anticipated learning outcomes

By the end of this sequence, learners will be able to:

- engage meaningfully with picturebooks.
- enhance their English language proficiency.
- interpret and analyse visual and textual elements in *Voices in the Park.*
- strengthen listening and viewing comprehension skills.
- develop writing skills through creative and reflective activities.
- improve arts and crafts abilities by designing and creating visual projects.
- reflect on their learning process.
- work collaboratively.
- foster artistic and aesthetic awareness through creative responses.

4.3.2 Procedure

4.3.2.1 The Hook

This sequence will begin in the same way as the previous one, since creating the right environment is essential for the students' engagement and understanding of the story. The teacher will guide the students to the school

library, where they will sit comfortably on pillows to help foster a relaxed and attentive atmosphere. Then the teacher will tell students that she is going to read a story by Anthony Browne.

To ignite interest and curiosity, the teacher will introduce a mystery box containing character cards. Each student will take turns drawing a card, placing it on the board, and describing the character. Afterward, they will make predictions about the relationships between the characters.

Character cards

4.3.2.2 Literature & Storytelling

The teacher will show students the front and back cover of the book and read the title of the picturebook, *Voices in the Park*. She will ask them what they notice about the letters of the title and to predict what the story is about. Then the teacher will explain that this is a story told from the point of view of four different characters. To personalise the discussion, the teacher will ask students if they go to the park, who they go with and what they do there.

Next, the teacher will read the story using expressive techniques, pausing at key moments to allow students to observe, make comments, ask questions, and check their previous predictions.

4.3.2.3 Creative Responses

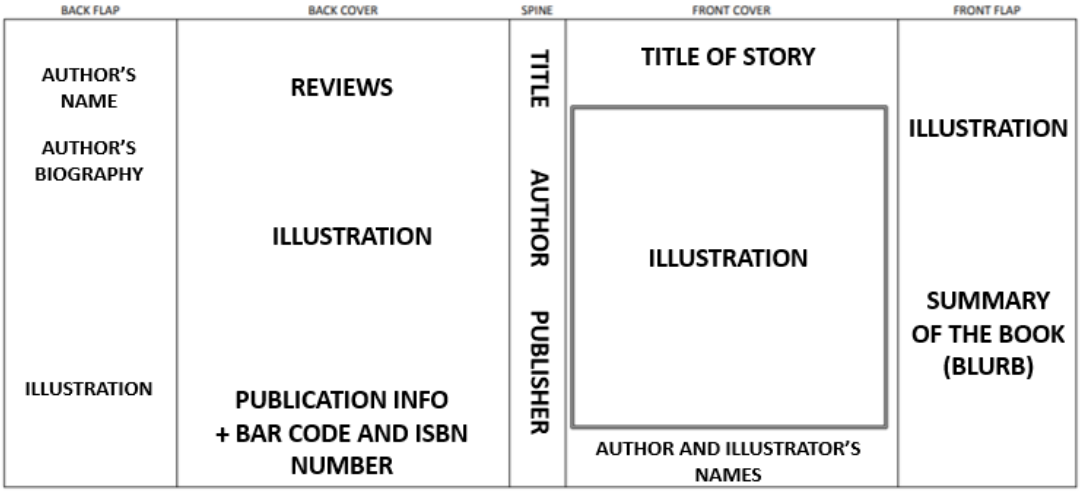
After reading *Voices in the Park*, students are invited to choose one of the following creative response activities. These responses encourage a deeper understanding of the narrative, characters, and themes, while fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity.

- **Design a body wall**: This activity allows students to delve into character analysis. Students will visually and textually explore the emotions, personality traits, and significant moments of a chosen character from *Voices in the Park*.

  First, students will choose a character from the story. Then they will tape two blank posters together and spread them out on the floor. One student will lie down flat on the posters and the others will trace the outline of their body using a marker. Within the character's body, they can include quotes from the story, and drawings, symbols and phrases that describe and represent the character's personality, emotions, or significant moments. In the space surrounding the body outline, they can write or draw information about the story. Finally, students will display their completed body walls.

  By completing this activity, students will analyse the personality, emotions, and development of a character in *Voices in the Park*; demonstrate understanding of key events and themes in the story; develop creativity and teamwork; and use textual evidence (quotes) and symbolism to support character analysis.

- **Create a book jacket**: First, the teacher will display a variety of book jackets and guide students to identify their key components such as front cover, back cover, spine, and flaps. Then students will plan and draft their book jackets taking into account the template provided. For the front cover, they will create an eye-catching illustration or collage that represents the book's tone and multiple perspectives and write the title (*Voices in the Park*) and author's name (Anthony Browne) in a creative and readable font. For the back cover, they will write reviews or include a compelling quote from the book. They will also add illustrations, publication information, a barcode, and an ISBN number. For the flaps, they will write a short biography of Anthony Browne and include a creative summary, which should be enticing but must not reveal the ending. Illustrations can also be included to enhance the flaps. For the spine, they will design a simple layout with the book's title and other key information. Once their drafts are ready and checked, students will create their final version. They will use a combination of art supplies such as markers, coloured pencils, and paints. They will be encouraged to pay close attention to the layout, colour choices, and typography to ensure their design aligns with the story. Finally, students will display their completed book jackets. By completing this activity, students will analyse the narrative and visual elements of *Voices in the Park*; demonstrate understanding of characters, setting, plot, and symbolism; develop writing skills through summarisation and critical reflection; and develop creativity and teamwork.



Adapted from Beacon, G. (2022). *Book Jackets.*

4.3.2.4 Reflection

This stage consists of two sections designed to encourage reflection and self-assessment. First, students will participate in a guided discussion to answer personal response questions. Once the discussion is complete, they will fill out a self-evaluation worksheet to reflect on their comprehension, participation, and collaborative efforts. Both activities have been adapted from the work of Ellis and Gruenbaum[5].

Part 1: Personal Response Questions

The personal response questions will be addressed through class discussions to encourage thoughtful engagement and sharing of ideas.

- What did you like about the story? Why?
- What is your favourite illustration? Why?
- Who is your favourite character? Why?
- How did the story make you feel?
- What would you say to Anthony Browne?

Part 2: Self-Evaluation

Students will reflect on their participation and learning by completing a self-evaluation worksheet. For each question, they will draw a face to indicate how well they feel they performed.

[5] Ellis, G., & Gruenbaum, T. (2024). *Words and pictures library*. Retrieved from https://wordsandpictureslibrary.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/evaluation-3.pdf

SELF-EVALUATION

How well did I do? Draw the face to show how well you feel you did.

Did I understand the general meaning of the story?

Did I look at the pictures to help understand the story?

Did I look at the teacher's facial expressions and gestures and listen to changes in her voice to help understand the story?

Did I actively participate in class discussions about the story?

Did I display my completed book jacket or body wall?

Did I collaborate well with my classmates during group activities?

Besides, as with the previous didactic sequence, the teacher will reflect on the lessons by considering the following questions:

- Have the lessons been meaningful for my students?
- What went well in this lesson? Why?
- What challenges or problems have I experienced?
- Were the lessons student-centred?
- What could I have done differently?

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the intricate narrative and visual strategies employed by Anthony Browne in *Into the Forest* and *Voices in the Park*. Both picturebooks exemplify the unique interplay of text and illustration that characterises Browne's work. Through detailed analyses of key elements such as inter- and intratextuality, indeterminacy, fragmentation, and experimentation, the paper has illuminated how Browne crafts multi-layered narratives that invite readers to become active participants in the meaning-making process. Browne's works challenge traditional notions of passive readership by positioning the reader as a co-author. He creates texts that do not simply convey a story, but instead foster a dynamic dialogue between the author, the text, and the reader. This relationship transforms the act of reading into a collaborative process, where the reader's imagination and prior knowledge enrich the narrative. As a result, every engagement with Browne's picturebooks offers new perspectives and interpretations, making his texts dynamic and ever-evolving.

Moreover, these picturebooks serve as spaces for aesthetic and intellectual exploration, where readers of all ages can find different layers of meaning. For those equipped with a robust understanding of cultural and literary references, Browne's works reveal intertextual/visual and intratextual/visual references that heighten the reading experience. However, readers who may not yet possess this background knowledge can still

appreciate his stories as unique and imaginative texts, enjoying them on a different but equally valid level. Hence, it can be said that despite their classification as "children's literature," Browne's picturebooks transcend simplistic categorisations and offer something profound and resonant for all readers.

Understanding the intricacies of picturebooks, as well as the works of important authors and the techniques they employ, is essential for teachers. Knowledge of Browne's unique strategies, including intertextuality, fragmentation, experimentation, and indeterminacy, equips teachers to guide students in critical engagement with the text. By exploring both the textual and visual elements, teachers can help students develop a deeper appreciation for the creative possibilities of picturebooks. The detailed analysis of Browne's works enhances teachers' ability to design engaging and thought-provoking lessons that stimulate imagination, foster critical thinking, and promote creativity. In addition, it enables them to tailor their teaching to diverse learners by using picturebooks as dynamic, multifaceted tools that support language development, social awareness, and emotional understanding. This comprehensive knowledge provides teachers with the confidence and competence to deliver lessons that enrich students' learning experiences.

At its core, *Into the Forest* is a story about courage, familial relationships, and self-discovery. Browne incorporates visual and textual references to fairy tales such as *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, and *Hansel and Gretel.* These links blur the line between reality and imagination and challenge readers to question the nature of the protagonist's journey. The forest, depicted in monochromatic tones, becomes both a literal setting and a metaphorical space of transformation. Browne's illustrations further enhance the narrative, using colour contrasts, visual symbols, and dynamic page layouts to evoke tension and wonder. Also, the story's indeterminacy, particularly regarding the father's absence and the surreal encounters in the forest, encourages readers to fill in the gaps with their imagination.

Voices in the Park is a picturebook that uses a multi-perspective narrative to explore themes of social class, identity, and human connection. The story is told through the eyes of four distinct characters during a visit to the park. Browne employs fragmented storytelling, creating a "stories within stories" framework and pairing each character's narrative with a unique visual style and typographic design. Again, Browne uses intertextual and intratextual references to enhance its narrative, drawing on his own previous works and iconic artworks like *The Scream* and *The Mona Lisa*. Browne employs variations in the grammar of illustrations to create a non-linear, multi-layered narrative. Visual symbols evoke emotional states and hint at deeper meanings. Colour plays a key role, with muted tones reflecting sadness in the Second Voice, and vibrant colours symbolising Smudge's optimism in the Fourth Voice. Browne also manipulates time and atmosphere within scenes, such as juxtaposing day and night in the bandstand to represent timeless joy. Indeterminacy is central, as readers must interpret visual symbols and navigate the open-ended conclusion.

Both didactic sequences presented in this paper follow the 4-step model for working with picturebooks proposed by Griselda Beacon, which includes a hook, literature & storytelling, creative responses, and a reflection on the part of students and the teacher. These sequences are designed for students with an A2 level (CEFR) who attend a private school in CABA and have nine periods of English per week.

The first sequence, which focuses on *Into the Forest*, is intended for the first part of the year and spans four lessons. For the hook, the teacher engages students with a magic hat containing objects from familiar fairy tales. Students then work in groups to complete story puzzles of different fairy tales, which they present to the class. Then the teacher reads the story and encourages predictions and engagement. The creative responses stage offers various activities, including creating zines, designing new scenes, and using a graphic organiser to summarise the story's elements. The final stage involves an exit ticket where students reflect on their learning, identify challenges, and express their thoughts through drawings and words. The teacher also reflects on lesson effectiveness.

The sequence for *Voices in the Park*, designed for the second part of the school year, consists of three lessons. For the hook, the teacher sets a relaxed and engaging environment, where students interact with a mystery box containing character cards to spark curiosity and predict relationships between characters. For the second stage, literature & storytelling, the teacher uses expressive reading techniques and engages students with questions, observations, and predictions. For the creative responses, students can choose between designing a character body wall or creating a book jacket. Both activities help students develop critical thinking and visual design skills and encourage creativity and teamwork. In the final stage, students engage in personal response questions and self-evaluation, reflecting on their understanding, participation, and collaboration. The teacher also reflects on the effectiveness of the lessons.

The present paper provides a good starting point for discussion and further research on Anthony Browne's works. Given the richness and complexity of his picturebooks, this small-scale study has only attempted to explore two of his picturebooks, *Into the Forest* and *Voices in the Park*. Therefore, future research could extend these findings by exploring a broader range of Browne's works or examining comparative studies with other contemporary picturebook creators. Besides, the discussion of the findings with colleagues could be the first step in a process which may generate different alternative interpretations of the texts. These alternatives should, in turn, be elaborated upon so that new hypotheses may arise. Hence, this paper should not be viewed as a final result but, as everything we write, a work in progress.

In conclusion, Anthony Browne's picturebooks offer unparalleled richness that bridges literary artistry and educational value. They serve as powerful tools for educators because they foster imagination, empathy, and critical engagement, while also reminding readers of all ages that the world of children's literature can be as complex, layered, and transformative as any other literary genre.

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