

Picturebooks of Escape

Developing Empathy in Classrooms

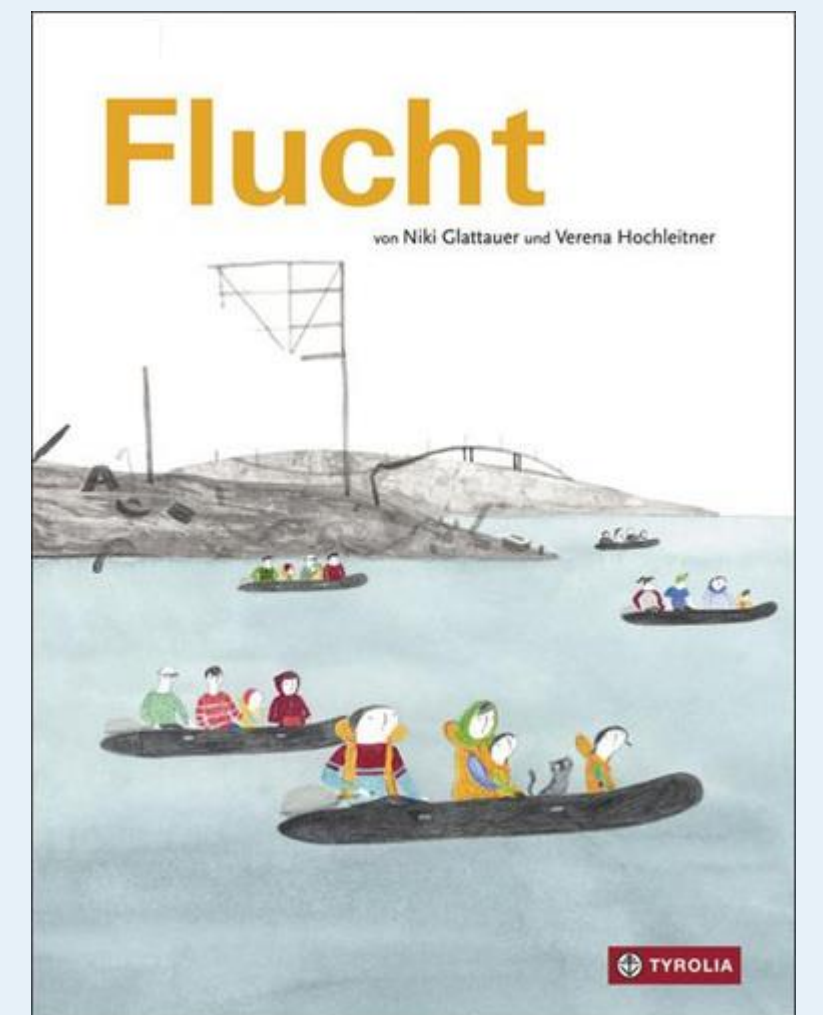
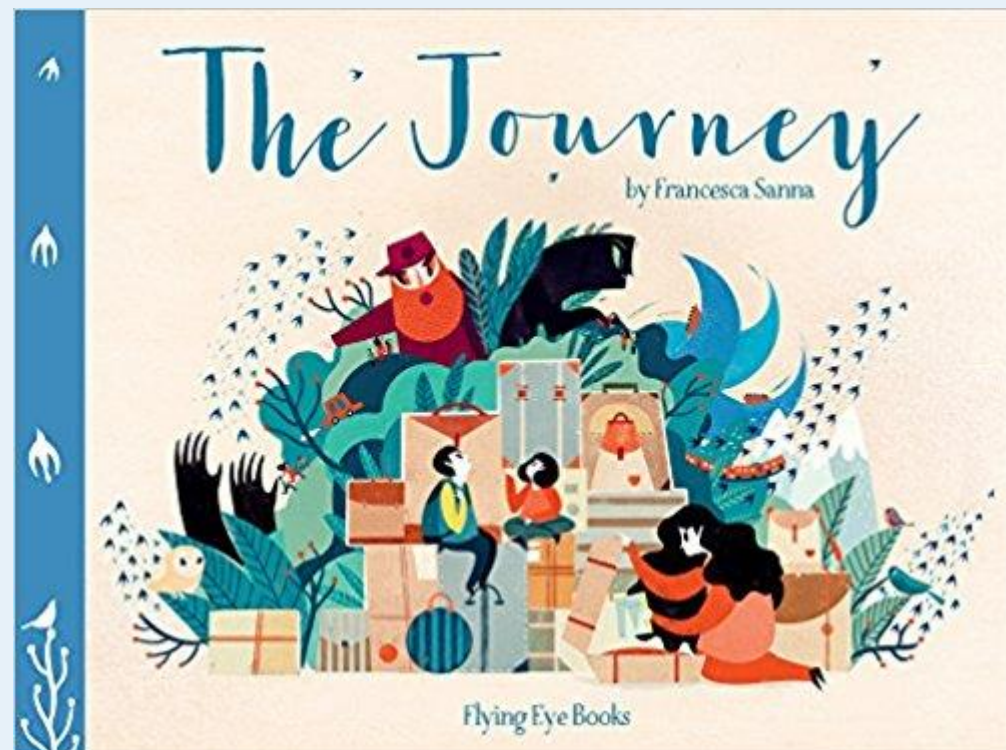
Sabine Fuchs / Austria

Experimental or postmodern picturebooks, as an artistic visual representation in symbolic pictures and archetypic stories, present complex situations. Therefore, they help to understand different, also traumatic experiences (e.g. escape from war), cultural identities and help to evoke empathy. The challenging process of understanding the others is encouraged by working with picturebooks in lessons.

Out of the huge numbers of picturebooks dealing with escape, two very different books are selected for lessons in the classroom.

Both were edited 2016. *The Journey* from Francesca Sanna has been awarded with the gold medal of the Society of illustrators (US) and is translated in 14 languages. Francesca Sanna condenses narratives of escape to one singular archetypic story. Her symbolic picture language offers emotional identification.

Flucht from Niki Glattauer and Verena Hochleitner is well known in the German speaking countries. They tell the story of escape from the point of view of the son's cat, which he doesn't want to leave. At the end we realize, that the family escape from North to South.



“The multimedial nature of picturebooks invites an interesting contemplation of the difference on emotional responses to words and images, and thus of the potential synergetic effect of two medias.” (Nikolajeva 2014, 94)

Reading books in classrooms is presented in three phases, based on reading as a **responsiv act** (Mitterer 2016) and **dialog** (Ruf 2008) with the general assumption, that understanding can never be completed.



Phase 1: Pathos

→ I get in dialog with the book

Who is telling the story? In which distance?

What can I see at the pictures as a whole and in detail?

What are my feelings with the colors?

In text and picture – what do I not know, is strange?



Phase 2: Sense of Possibility and Theory → We are searching for interpretation.

In the classroom we all together discuss our first understanding and develop different ways of interpretation, always with the attention on the text and pictures.

Does the book tell something you have experienced yourself in a similar way? Are facts about the story, we can research? What is the common sense of different colors? What theory can be used, when the family at the beach does not recognise the black water (top left) or when the house is under water and the same people are in the boat above (top right)?



Phase 3: Application and Creative Response

→ I relate the story to my life.

Can I respect, how the figures act?

Can I feel with the figures?

Where is our land of hope or where are we welcomed?

When or what for I would risk my life?



(Post)modern picturebooks offer in the interdependence of text and pictures more than at first sight can be recognised and thus close reading is rewarded by deeper insights. The experience of working with picturebooks in classrooms can be summarized in this way:

- ✓ (Young) readers are longer attracted by picturebooks, if challenging in text and image.
 - ✓ To look closely at text and image and the interdependence of both is essential.
- ✓ Teacher as well as pupils are on an equal footing with the dialogue on the books.
 - ✓ The authority is the text and image.
 - ✓ There is no final interpretation.

Literature

Glattauer, Niki; Hochleitner Verena (2016) *Flucht*. (Engl. Escape) Tyrolia. – Sanna, Francesca (2016) *The Journey*. Flying Eye Books (Die Flucht. 2016 A.d. Engl. Thomas Bodmer. Nord Süd)
Arizpe, Evelyn; Styles, Morag et al (2008): *The Voices Behind the Pictures: Children Responding to Postmodern Picturebooks*. In: Sipe, Lawrence R.; Pantaleo, Sylvia (ed.) (2008): *Postmodern Picturebooks. Play, Parody, and Self-Referentiality*. New York, London: Routledge. – Mitterer, Nicola (2016) *Das Fremde in der Literatur. Zur Grundlegung einer responsiven Literaturdidaktik*. Bielefeld: transcript. – Nikolajeva, Maria (2014) *Reading for Learning. Cognitive approaches to children's literature*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. – Ritter, Alexandra (2014): *Bilderbucharten von Kindern. Neue Erzählformen im Spannungsfeld von kindlicher Rezeption und Produktion*. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren. – Ruf, Urs (2008) *Das Dialogische Lernmodell*. In: Ruf, Urs; Keller, Stefan; Winter Felix (ed.) (2008) *Besser lernen im Dialog. Dialogisches Lernen in der Unterrichtspraxis*. Seelze-Velber: Klett/Kallmeyer. p. 13-23.

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