

Tempe Center for the Arts

by **Mary Erickson, Ph.D.**
and **Arizona art teacher Jamie Watts, Ph.D.**

Read Me a Picture is a three-lesson mini unit plan designed in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name that highlights nine Arizona children's book illustrators at the Gallery at the Tempe Center for the Arts.

[Read Me a Picture Exhibition Preview PowerPoint](#)

Themes

- Theme in Life: Our world is filled with words and pictures that give us information.
- Theme in Art: Artists use words and pictures to tell stories and share ideas.

Key Questions



What subject matter and symbols do you see?



How do some artists show things in realistic detail and other artists simplify them?

Community Connections

All around us, on TV, on the Internet and on the streets of our communities, we are confronted with verbal and pictorial messages. Artists, designers and advertisers use words and pictures to capture attention, entertain and sell products, services and ideas.

Activities

[Pre-visit classroom activity: Reading Words and Pictures \(pdf\)](#)

[TCA Activity: Exploring How Pictures Tell Stories at the Tempe Center for the Arts \(pdf\)](#)

[Post-Visit Classroom Activity: Making My Own Book \(pdf\)](#)

Resources

[Preview the Read Me a Picture Exhibition PowerPoint](#)

[Reading Words and Pictures PowerPoint](#)

[Exploring Words and Pictures at the Tempe Center for the Arts \(pdf\)](#)

[Making My Own Book PowerPoint](#)

[Questor Questions.pdf](#)

Web Resources

[Degrees of Abstraction](#)

This presentation uses landscapes from the Minneapolis Institute of Art and Walker Museum to introduce different degrees of abstraction in art. (Click "Present" to begin.)

Supplies

11-inch x 17-inch paper (or other rectangular paper)

Markers

Crayons

Pencils

Scissors

Ruler

Rubber stamps

Optional items for binding

Rubber bands, ribbon, yarn or string

Bamboo skewers for spine support

Credits

Anne Coe

Shonto Begay

Molly Schaar Idle

Ken and Sylvia Marantz

Jamie Watts' students at Ironwood High School in the Peoria Unified School District.

Trader Joe's of Tempe

Estimated Time

Previsit Lesson = 30 to 60 minutes

TCA Visit Lesson = Field Trip

Postvisit Lesson = 180 to 300 minutes

Pre-visit Classroom Lesson

Objectives

- Students identify everyday examples of pictures (alone or with words) that have a message.
- Students compare highly detailed realistic pictures with simplified or abstract pictures.

Preparation

Preview the [Reading Words and Pictures PowerPoint](#) presentation. Decide whether you will supplement the PowerPoint by bringing in everyday examples of pictures used to communicate, such as pictorial signs around the school, pictures of the school mascot, posters, greeting cards, children's books and textbook, CD, DVD or video game covers, etc.

[Visit Degrees of Abstraction](#)

(Click "Present" to begin.) For secondary grades, you may wish to use the examples of increasingly abstracted landscape paintings.

Activities

As you show the "Reading Words and Pictures" presentation, lead students in a discussion responding to the questions. Ask students to practice "reading" everyday pictures you may have brought to class. Extend the discussion by asking students to identify pictures with many realistic details, simple pictures with few details and pictures in which parts are changed (distorted or exaggerated).

at the Tempe Center for the Arts

Objectives

- Students compare detailed, more realistic artworks with abstract, more simplified or changed artworks.
- Students simplify a picture with much realistic detail into a simpler picture.

Preparation

Make arrangements for field-trip to the Tempe Center for the arts (TCA). Before your visit, discuss with assigned TCA docent, if possible. Provide the docent with a copy of “Exploring Words and Pictures at the Tempe Center for the Arts” worksheet in advance of your trip and discuss the extent to which students might complete any or all of the worksheet at the center or whether any or all of the questions might be addressed during their tour.

Read “Questor Questions” for additional information and questions focused on Anne Coe and her work, which you might use at the exhibition. Also, scroll down to read a brief review of Madelaine Dunfy’s *Here is the Southwestern Desert* illustrated by Anne Coe.

Activities

Distribute the “Exploring Words and Pictures at the Tempe Center for the Arts” worksheets to students and ask them to answer as many questions as they can during their tour. If writing responses on the worksheet is not practical or possible during the tour, use the worksheet to guide students in focused observation as circumstances permit. For example, you might use questions on the worksheet when students assemble or travel to the TCA or when they assemble for or travel back to school. Take notes on any new information presented by the docent as well as interesting questions, observations or responses made by your students during their tour. If the circumstances of the visit do not allow students to complete their worksheets, explain that later, in class, you will lead a discussion of discoveries they made by comparing detailed, realistic illustrations and simpler, abstract artworks used to illustrate children’s books.

If a visit to the TCA is not possible, display selected artworks from the Preview the [Read Me a Picture Exhibition PowerPoint](#) for a variety of children’s book illustrations made by Arizona artists.

Book Review of *Here Is the Southwestern Desert* by Madelaine Dunfy illustrated by Anne Coe

“The book tells its story, provides a capsule image of a Southwestern desert in two parallel ways. The text uses words to describe growing things in the desert, while the visual employs naturalistic paintings of these things and their relationships. But Coe also creates metaphors in which the creatures symbolize human behavior and emotions. What is the bobcat thinking as he spied the badger from his rocky perch? Is the badger aware of his role in the food chain which is poetically delivered in the text’s ‘This is the House that Jack Built’ patterned verse? Coe creates mini-dramas, choosing to evoke anticipation while denying the viewer the ultimate climaxes where prey and predator fatally interact.”

Ken Marantz, Professor Emeritus of Art Education at The Ohio State University and Sylvia Marantz, librarian, children’s book and picture book collectors and reviewers.

by Arizona art teacher **Jamie Watts, Ph.D.**,
with **Mary Erickson, Ph.D.**

Objectives

- Students construct and illustrate a picture book.
- Students use detailed or abstracted images, or a combination, in their picture books.

Supplies

11-inch x 17-inch paper (or other rectangular paper)

Markers

Crayons

Pencils

Scissors

Ruler

Rubber stamps

Optional items for binding

Rubber bands or ribbon/yarn/string

Bamboo skewers for spine support

Preparation

Preview [Making My Own Book PowerPoint](#). Select the size of paper and media appropriate for your students. Decide whether you will ask your students to add covers to their books. Follow the story-construction steps in the “Making My Own Book” PowerPoint or adapt them for your students. The presentation provides step-by-step diagrams and photographs that clearly spell out all the steps in making a book. Student books will have a cover, back and six inside pages if they do not add a separate cover. With the cover, books will have eight pages.

Activities

Use the “Making My Own Book” PowerPoint to show students how to make their own folded paper book. Use the story-construction ideas in the PowerPoint, or other instructions appropriate for your students, to help them write a story for six or eight pages, depending on whether your students will add covers. As they write their stories ask them to think about how they can use pictures on each page to help tell their stories.

Review the difference between realistic, detailed pictures and simplified/abstract pictures. Ask each student to decide whether abstract pictures, realistic pictures or a combination of abstract and realistic pictures will best illustrate his or her story. Keep in mind that realistic pictures will take longer than other media, such as stamping or collage.

Theater/Literature Connections

You may wish to reinforce learning in theatre or literature by emphasizing characters and plot development in students’ story writing.

Questor Questions About Anne Coe's Illustrations



LOOK

What do you see right away?

What details did you only notice after looking carefully?



LEARN

Anne Coe is a fourth-generation Arizonan who grew up in the desert. She helped establish the Superstition Mountain Land Trust.



INTERPRET

"Coe creates mini-dramas, choosing to evoke anticipation while denying the viewer the ultimate climaxes where prey and predator fatally interact."

Ken and Sylvia Marantz, book collectors and reviewers.

"I didn't see the squirrels until you read the words."

Anonymous six-year-old.

What stories do Anne Coe's paintings tell?



COMPARE

Find another book illustration in the exhibition that is more abstract than Anne Coe's.

How does each type of picture (realistic or abstract) add to the meaning or mood of the story?

Exploring Words and Pictures at the Tempe Center for the Arts

Before Anne Coe made paintings to illustrate *Here Is the Southwestern Desert* by Madeleine Dunphy, she made careful planning sketches.



1. Find and circle areas that are different from the sketch to the painting.
2. Look at other illustrations in the exhibition. Find and describe an illustration that is more abstract or simplified than Coe's.

Artist's Name: _____ Title: _____

Pick one thing in the image. Describe how the artist has changed or simplified the object from real-life to illustration.

3. Use this space to draw your own version of an Anne Coe illustration. Change or simplify one aspect of the image.

