

Smile for the Camera: Children and Surveillance in Picture Books

Children have traditionally been surveilled by parents, and stories about escaping that surveillance, at least temporarily, have enabled the development of plenty of plots and protagonists. This pattern holds whether it is Robert McCloskey's Sal wandering away from her mother's side in *Blueberries for Sal* or a rascal of the first order like Beatrice Potter's Peter raiding Mr. McGregor's garden in *Peter Rabbit*. Today, a trend toward constant, universal surveillance of children is simple to trace, whether it is practiced by the hovering mother in Robert Munsch and Sheila McGraw's *Love You Forever* or a sanctimoniously spying toy in Aebersold and Bell's *Elf on the Shelf*. Learning to manage surveillance, to question it, and to resist it is becoming a form of activism important both for individual freedom and to protect the freedom of others. Some 21st century picture books equip young readers to identify the assumptions that generate and justify surveillance and provide a scaffolding for distinguishing between healthy curiosity and invasive practices. Building off of surveillance scholar David Lyon's analysis of the inherent tension that arises for parents and caregivers between enabling and constraining or caring and controlling, this paper will focus on how the illustrations in picture books normalize or challenge surveillance practices.