

## Mapping the Metafictional Picturebook

This presentation will begin by offering a definition of metafiction for picturebooks and will continue by categorizing various types of this mode of writing. In general, *metafiction* refers to self-reflexive narratives that foreground the artificial nature of fiction: stories about storytelling, characters who know they are characters in a book, readers and/or authors appearing inside the narrative space of a text are some exemplary cases. By employing Patricia Waugh's, Linda Hutcheon's, Umberto Eco's and Werner Wolf's definitions of adult metafiction as frameworks, I propose that metafiction in picturebooks should include the following criteria, which can stem from either the pictorial or the verbal level of the text: For a text to be considered metafictional, it should reference itself as text or as illustration, it should reference other texts or illustrations, or it should reference other forms of storytelling and their conventions.

It should also accentuate the reader's presence and make the reading process salient. Finally, it should presuppose that it is delivered through a medium; its 'reality' is understood as mediated by another reality lurking beyond itself.

Based on this definition, I suggest that there are five categories of metafictional picturebooks: the abc book, the wordless picturebook, the interactive / reader-response picturebook, the intertextual/parodic picturebook, and the you- picturebook. These categories are not meant to operate as a rigid grid but rather to help us understand the latest manifestations of metafiction and advance knowledge on self-reflexive texts. My discussion will draw from the following examples: Emily Gravette's *Wolves*, David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs*, Lauren Child's *Who's Afraid of The Big Bad Book*, Hervé Tullet's *Press Here*, Mark Ludy's *The Flower Man*, William Joyce and Joe Bluhm's *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore*, Richard Byrne's *This Book just Ate my Dog*, Aaron Becker's *Journey and Return*, Mo Willem's *We Are in a Book*, Louise Yates *Dog Loves Drawing and Dog Loves Books*.