

## **The Use of Color, Line, and Fine Art to Strengthen Readers' Visual Literacy in *You Can't Take a Balloon Into the Metropolitan Museum***

Wordless picture books have proliferated since the 1960s, and in 2012, Sandra Beckett noted that they had become “a contemporary publishing trend” (83-84) since the 1990s. Their popularity is likely due, at least in part, to both their ability to transcend language barriers and their emphasis on visual literacy as the sole skill required to extract narrative meaning. In *Words about Pictures* (1988), Perry Nodelman suggests that visual literacy is the first language we learn as young children and that it fades into the background and must be relearned after we shift our focus to textual literacy. Wordless and nearly-wordless picture books, beyond existing as breathtaking works of art, are useful as a means for learning to pick up on visual cues in the interpretation of narrative, particularly for readers more comfortable with pictures only when they are accompanied by a reassuring block of text. Jaqueline Preiss Weitzman and Robin Preiss Glasser's *You Can't Take a Balloon Into the Metropolitan Museum* (1998) is a skillfully-rendered example of a wordless picture book which, in addition to being beautifully illustrated, also gently trains readers to be visually literate. My presentation will focus on Weitzman and Glasser's use of three particular elements—the strategic presence of color in each spread, the various shapes of the titular balloon and its string, and the integration of classic works of fine art—to guide the reader toward a recognition of thematic meaning and character development in pictures alone without the benefit of textual aids.