Reading Visual Narratives
Image Analysis of Children's Picture Books

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Contemporary children’s picture books provide a rich domain for developing theory and analysis of visual meaning and its relation to accompanying verbal text. This book offers new descriptions of the visual strand of meaning in picture book narratives as a way of furthering the project of 'multimodal' discourse analysis and of explaining the literacy demands and apprenticing techniques of children’s earliest literature.

Reading Visual Narratives uses the principles of systemic-functional theory to organise an explicit account of visual meaning in relation to three perspectives: the visual construction of the narrative events and characters (ideational meaning), the visual positioning of the reader through choices related to focalisation and appraisal (interpersonal meaning) and the discourse organization of visual meanings through choices in framing and composition (textual meaning). The descriptions throughout are illustrated with examples from highly regarded children’s picture books.

Reading Visual Narratives extends previous social-semiotic accounts of the ‘grammar’ of the image, by focussing attention on discourse level meanings and on semantic relationships created by sequences of images. At the same time, it extends current understandings of how picture books work through its explicit and systematic account of the visual meanings and their integration with verbal aspects of the texts.

It will be of interest to researchers in multimodal discourse analysis, systemic-functional theory, and children’s literature and literacy.

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...the authors have achieved their goal to contribute to existing descriptions of visual meaning as well as to intermodality. This book should be of particular interest to those looking to diversify their work with images in educational contexts, since it offers theoretically sound networks and frameworks to inform analysis at varying levels.

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Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty, professionals, and practitioners.

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Overall, *Reading Visual Narratives* is an important contribution to the field of social semiotics, in general, and to the study of visual-verbal narratives in children’s picture books, in particular. Painter et al. have produced a work that is (almost) as fascinating as the material upon which it is based.

*LinguistList, June 2013*