Footpath Flowers – JonArno Lawson & Sydney Smith
Walker Books 9781406365167

This is on the way home, a little girl collects wild flowers, leaving them as gifts as she goes, unnoticed by her dad, who is continuously distracted. Full of quiet contemplation, it is the perfect example of a story that simply cannot be told in words.

Door – JiHyeon Lee
Chronicle Books 9781452171425

In a grey world full of unhappy people, a child follows a colourful little bug which leads him to a door. Beyond its threshold lies a world of colour, strange creatures and happiness. A wonderful tale of how interacting with others literally can change one’s world. See also Foul.

The Whale – Ethan & Vita Murrow
Big Picture Book 9781737017117

This award-winning retelling of Aesop’s fable is set in the African Serengeti, allowing Pinkney to create stunning landscape spreads and a beautiful fable that is sure to captivate children. As the seasons pass. The striking full-spread illustrations are incredibly detailed at work and portray a peaceful paradise that readers will yearn to revisit regularly.

Wednesday – David Wiesner
Andersen Press 9781849394475

A simple yet effective and engaging exploration of the art of wordless storytelling published by Yale University Press.

The Lion and the Mouse – Nils Pieters (translated by Greet Pauwelijn)
Chronicle Books 9781776571932

A simple playful format which uses the gutter as a sort of mirror, showing on either side of it people of different skin colour doing the same thing (feeling cold, eating a ice cream etc), this book carries an understated yet powerful message of unity and will encourage conversations about diversity.

Clockwork – JiHyeon Lee
Little Island Books 9781785820270

In a simple playful format which uses the gutter as a sort of mirror, this is definitely needed, making it more suitable for older readers.

The Girl and the Bicycle – Mark Pett
Simon & Schuster 9781442483194

A young girl desperate for a green bike decides to do small jobs to save some money, and soon begins to work for an older neighbour. With gorgeous sepia-toned artwork, this book carries an understated yet powerful message.

Bluebird – Bob Staake
Andersen Press 9781784841853

This is on the way home, a little girl’s friendship with a bluebird, who sacrifices himself to save the boy from harm by bullocks. Touchingly poignant yet neverafilms like the sound of a lullaby in this book.

The Tree House – Marjou Tolman & Randal Tolman
Lemniscape 9788070001070

Two pensive children reading in a tree house, reading their books, and watching the world around them changing as the seasons pass. The striking full-spread illustrations are incredibly detailed at work and portray a peaceful paradise that readers will yearn to revisit regularly.

Flood – Alvaro F Villia
Cirlce of Life 9781848881261

A simple story, in a simple playful format which uses the gutter as a sort of mirror, this is a lovely story of inter-generational friendship, an older neighbour. With gorgeous sepia-toned artwork, this book carries an understated yet powerful message.

Whale – Ethan & Vita Murrow
Chronicle Books 9781776571932

A simple yet effective and engaging exploration of the art of wordless storytelling published by Yale University Press.

The Holidays – Marije Tolman & Ronald Tolman
Little Island Books 9781785820270

Four stories, one for each season, each with a short lyrical textual introduction. It’s a perfect study of man’s relationship with nature. See also his Pink ochh.

The Arrival – Shaun Tan
Hodder Children’s Books 9789707441586

The ultimate wordless picturebook, this is the story of every migrant who has undertaken the journey to a new land, and the hopes and challenges this displacement brings. Mixing both the familiar and the fantastical, it conveys beautifully how confusing a new land and its inhabitants can be.

The River – Alessandro Sanna
Enchanted Lion Books 9781592701490

This visually challenging graphic novel is beautiful and reminds us that nature can be found in the most unexpected places.

Daniel – Stefania Zecchi & Mariachiara Di Giorgio
Andersen Press 9781783441853

This is a simple yet effective and engaging exploration of the art of wordless storytelling published by Yale University Press.

Plastic – Marije Tolman & Ronald Tolman
Little Island Books 9781785820270

With superbly atmospheric artwork, this book explores the devastating effect a flood has on a family as its impending arrival displaces them and changes their home. Ultimately full of hope, this is a powerful read, with the most wonderful use of colour.

Fool – Shaun Tan
Walker Books 9781406332049

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FOOTPAGES: – JonArno Lawson & Sydney Smith

The Federation of Children’s Book Groups
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THOUGHT-PROVOKING THEMES AND LONGER NARRATIVES

Bluebird – Bob Staake
Andersen Press 9781784841853

This is on the way home, a little girl’s friendship with a bluebird, who sacrifices himself to save the boy from harm by bullocks. Touchingly poignant yet never seen before, there is real quiet beauty in this book.

Waterloo & Trafalgar – Olivier Tallec
Enchanted Lion Books 9781592701728

In hundreds of small, panoramic watercolour illustrations, Tallec explores life on the battlefields of the north of Italy. The book contains four stories, one for each season, each with a short lyrical textual introduction. It’s a perfect study of man’s relationship with nature. See also his Pink ochh.

The Boy, the Bear, the Baron, the Bard and Other Dramatic Tales – Gregory Rogers
Hodder Children’s Books 9780340693405

Nurturing the crossing behind mass exodus and the desperate attempts of refugees to cross the Mediterranean is made all the more powerful when told without words, particularly when conveyed by dark charcoal drawing. An unflinching, thought-provoking and eye-opening account of the refugee crisis and its causes.

Arrangement – Tim Gurnett
Jonathan Cape 9781447240455

Two children, both stricken by the loss of their mothers, come together at an abandoned reservoir, thanks to their love of swimming for one and a fascination for contraceptives for the other. This visually challenging graphic novel is beautiful and reminds us that love can be found in the most unexpected places.

Two for the Carnival – Madeleine L’sher
Hodder Children’s Books 9780340758660

This visually challenging graphic novel is beautiful and reminds us that love can be found in the most unexpected places.

The Mediterranean – Armin Guder
Allen & Unwin Children’s Books 9781760634018

The Federation of Children’s Book Groups
Registered Charity No.262289

When pictures tell a thousand stories...

A selection of wordless picturebooks for all ages

Compiled by Mélanie McGilloway
for the Federation of Children’s Book Groups
When pictures tell a thousand stories ...

Wordless picture books can easily be described as books in which the narrative is told entirely through sequenced illustrations with no or little text to support it. It is somewhat perplexing therefore that with the term we choose to define them, we focus on the thing they do not contain: word-less. This almost sounds dismissive, when in fact wordless narratives are incredibly sophisticated and make great demands on their readers; without a text to guide them, it is up to readers to decide how to interpret the visual narrative. The reader is empowered, becoming storyteller, and there are as many potential stories as there are readers and readings. Used with younger children alongside an adult, they will open up discussions about language development and support language development, but they are equally important for older readers, with the lack of text removing a barrier for many, allowing them to bring their own experiences and thoughts to the narratives. This is why many wordless picture books, but not all, deal with challenging, thought-provoking themes such as depression, loss, alienation, and misperceptions. With so many wonderful ‘silent narratives’ available, the following list is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather a varied selection of what is available. It has been split into three categories: those are by no means rigid and only offer an indication of potential suitability.

**Wordless Wonders for the Youngest Readers**

Where’s the Elephant? – Barroux
Egmont 978-1-4052-77167
Using a ‘hide and seek’ style narrative with animals facing increasingly fewer places in the forest to hide from civilisation, this picture book offers a powerful commentary on the effects of deforestation. See also Where’s the Staircase?

Flashlight – Liiy Boyd
Chronicle Books 978-1-4521-18949
A little boy on a camping trip decides to explore the forest at night with only a flashlight as a guide. This is conveyed with a dramatic use of colour which helps emphasise the magical night-time world. Full of details to discover, this might also help soothe nocturnal fears.

ApeH – Janik Coat
Dots 978-1-78757-370-2
Bright, bold and quirky, this large format picture book introduces basic shapes and every day objects. There are no words on the page apart from the names of the characters, and it does include words in a pictorial index. Perfect for the youngest readers.

Owl Bat Rat Ove – Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick
Walker Books 978-1-4063-73448
A family of owls and a family of bats settle on the same branch as the sun sets. Their uncomfortable cohabitation is soon challenged by inquisitive youngsters, and wild words. The book can also be read upside down, shifting the focus to the bat family. A warm-hearted celebration of family and sibling rivalry. Also available in board book format.

The sparkle Picnic – John S. Goodall
Ragged Bear 978-1-85714-1757
Glancing animal characters in Victorian costume. A beach blanket, this small book follows a family of cats as they set out on a picnic by the seaside. Enchanting and old-fashioned in the best possible way, the use of pages wonderfully enhances the narrative. See also Starry’s Birthday and Naughty Nancy.

Flora and the flamin’os – Molly Idle
Chronicle Books, 978-1-4521-00696
Join Flora and a flamingo as they come together in a graceful dance. The use of flaps makes the visual narrative dynamic and allows the child a sense of control. Background abstract shapes to focus readers to Flora and the flamingo’s action. See also Flora and the Hungry Flamingo and the Peacocks.

**VISUAL NARRATIVES FOR EVERYONE**

Caged – Duncan Anndern
Tom Butterworth 9780741183176
A bluebird builds her nest, while at the same time watching a two Vietnamese-looking gentlemen building a huge bird cage. They eventually imprison the great bluebird! Is it in, until the bluebird’s curiosity changes the situation dramatically. A clever exploration of freedom, the environment and human arrogance.

Wave – Suzy Lee
Chronicle Books 9788811859240
The simple storyline of a wave in the ocean is a visual marvel, with boundless energy bursting from the pages. It is so expressive you can almost hear the girl’s exclamations of mirth: it includes an impressive use of the book gutter. See also Mimic, Shadow and Lines.

My Museum – Jeanne Liu
Prestel 9783791737395
With words to describe the installations, this tale of a child’s visit to the museum reminds us that there is more than one way to experience and appreciate art galleries. With lots of famous works of art to spot, this offers the comfort needed after the loss of a dog. A wonderful tale about how human connections transcend time. See also Becker’s stunning trilogy: Journey, Quest and Return.

The latest from Beekman 1802
Puffin 9780243571725
This classic needs no introduction, having been enjoyed by adults and children alike for over fifty years. A love story which cleverly tackles race and the effects of deforestation. This picture book offers a powerful commentary on the impact of human arrogance.

Flora and the Penguin

A lovely story of a girl’s growing friendship with a bee which doubles as a well-pitched introduction to ecology and the importance of the role bees have in our gardens and in our landscape. Jay’s gentle drawings fit this story perfectly.

Nancy and the flamingo

Join Nancy and a flamingo as they come together in a graceful dance. The use of flaps makes the visual narrative dynamic and allows the child a sense of control. Background abstract shapes to focus readers to Flora and the flamingo’s action. See also Daisy Gets Lost.

Daisy Gets Lost – Chris Raschka
Schwartz & Wade 9781524769550
This classic needs no introduction, having been enjoyed by adults and children alike for over fifty years. A love story which cleverly tackles race and the effects of deforestation. This picture book offers a powerful commentary on the impact of human arrogance.

The landscape format emphasises the chase element of this hilarious story of a fox who steals a hen but whose intentions are unambiguously misunderstood by her friends who persuade him to attempt a rescue. A lovely story which cleverly tackles misconceptions. This is part of a series featuring the two heroes.

The chicken Thief – Beatrice Rodriguez
Gecko Press 9781877467321
This book board book edition of an award-winning story is a perfect introduction to silent narratives for the youngest of readers. Warm, colourful and fun, it touches on feelings of missed opportunities. Also available in board book format.

**Stunning artwork conveys the epic journey of a stone through time**

The simple storyline of a girl playing in the waves is a visual marvel, with boundless energy bursting from the pages. It is so expressive you can almost hear the girl’s exclamations of mirth: it includes an impressive use of the book gutter. See also Mimic, Shadow and Lines.

Mirror, Shadow – Lizi Boyd
Puffin 9780243571725
This classic needs no introduction, having been enjoyed by adults and children alike for over fifty years. A love story which cleverly tackles race and the effects of deforestation. This picture book offers a powerful commentary on the impact of human arrogance.

This is a story about a boy who has recently immigrated to New York. The wordless graphic spreads work beautifully at conveying not only the feelings of alienation and isolation caused by not comprehending the language and customs of a new land, but also the wonderment of finding oneself in a new place.