Kaleidoscope: When Perspectives Change

Theme: This project contains works that illustrate a change in perspective. There are many reasons and circumstances that lead to the ability to view things from a different perspective. Some of these changes are visual...they involve looking at something differently in order to see something else. Sometimes we learn to view ourselves in a new light. Sometimes undergoing a change in perspective allows us to see things through someone else’s eyes. Sharon Creech entitled one of her novels, *Walk Two Moons*, and quoted an old Native American saying: "Don't judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins." This kind of change in perspective deals more with inward changes. Some of these stories show a change in perspective for the character, while others allow the reader to go through that change.

Purpose: I explored this theme because I find that it is very interesting to walk with characters as they experience a change in perspective. It helps me to look at things differently and opens up my mind and heart to new ideas and ways of thinking. Sometimes it not so much the changes the character goes through, but the changes that occur in my perspective as I learn to look at things in a different way through the story. As I compared very different works that seemed to illustrate this theme, I found I was much more sensitive to the idea that perspective affects everything...every situation, every decision, every action. By being open to the exploration of different perspectives, we allow ourselves the opportunity to make insightful and thoughtful decisions.

Locating Items: I used my personal collection as well as books from the public and school libraries. I searched online at amazon.com and bn.com. It was most helpful to start with a book I already knew and then ask to see related books. In this way I discovered many new books I wasn’t familiar with before. I first learned of Kenny Rogers’ song, “The Greatest,” from my mom. She said I would really like this song. I did...and instantly saw how it tied in with my theme.

Citations:


Optical Illusion Magic invites readers to explore how our brain perceives the information we receive. Sometimes our eyes play tricks on us. We see things that aren’t really there or sometimes only see one thing when
other things are present. There are an amazing variety of illusions presented in this book and helpful explanations about why we see what we see, or don’t see if that is the case. The book is divided into sections that group illusions in a logical way and offers experiment to extend the learning. This is an excellent collection of illusions presented in an organized, colorful way to invite learners into the exploration of optical illusions. Another source for finding optical illusions can be found at: http://www.eyetricks.com/illusions.htm

Tana Hoban uses her photography skills to present everyday objects to young children from two perspectives. First they look through a small hole in a page covering the photograph and attempt to guess what they are looking at. By turning the page, the full picture is revealed. It is a fun way for little ones to learn about different ways of looking at objects.

Designed to be read from front to back and then flipped over and read from back to front, this clever book shows children how objects can turn into other things when looked at from another angle. Sailboats on water become kites in the sky on one page while the ferry becomes a restaurant on another. The story progresses from morning to night and light to dark as the child enjoys the perfect day.

“It’s just an old stick,” said the other kids…but Quin looked at the branch in her hand and saw many things. First she becomes a conductor and uses the stick as a baton to direct her orchestra. That one stick and her vivid imagination allow her to become a tiger trainer, firefighter, kayaker, magician, and artist. Not just a stick…but a training stick, mighty firehose, oar, magic wand, and paintbrush. Quin’s ability to look at the stick and see it in different ways opened her up to new worlds in her imagination.

She was the only one who noticed the chalk line squiggled on the sidewalk. She grabs it...now it’s a dragon, firecrackers, or a pool of water. The young girl sees many exciting things when her imagination takes that squiggle on many adventures. The soft brown pages coupled with calligraphy text and Chinese drawings, helps the readers to see some of the things this girl can see in “the squiggle” as they walk along the road of her imagination. “Sometimes things are not what they appear.”

Do you ever look in the looking-glass
And see a stranger there?
A child you know and do not know,
Wearing what you wear?

In just four short lines, this poet communicates a familiar feeling many of us have. When looking in a mirror, we sometimes see a stranger. This poem invites us to look deeper into ourselves, beyond how we look and what we wear.


The traditional tale is beautifully retold and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. The large egg surprised the mother duck, but she warmed it and cared for it even after it hatched. He didn’t look like the rest of the ducks and they were very unkind to him. Saved from hunters by his inability to fly, he is separated from the rest of the ducks. He wanders about with a longing to swim once again. He is trapped by ice and rescued, but continues to suffer alone because he was afraid. When Spring came, he returned to the water. His reflection in the water revealed that he had become a beautiful swan. He believes it was worth the suffering and loneliness because it taught him “what it was to be really happy.”


This poor chameleon is never satisfied. His life is not very exciting. That changed one day when he went to the zoo. He wished he could be like them. First he wished he could be a polar bear, but that didn’t make him happy. Each time he wished to be an animal, part of that animal would become part of the chameleon. Soon he had the head of an elephant, feet of a duck, tail of a fox, and antlers like a deer. He was very mixed-up and very hungry. But the poor chameleon, who was now a little of this and a little of that, couldn’t catch a fly. He wished to be himself again and finally caught that fly. That chameleon learned that being yourself is the best way to be.


This sweet song surprises the listener by telling of a young boy, claiming to be the greatest player of them all. Time and time again he attempts to throw the ball in the air and swing at it. But each time the ball falls to the ground. He demonstrates his persistence and tries again. In his mind he hears the cheers of his fans as the ball lands on the ground for the third time...strike out! In his mind, he certainly was the greatest pitcher ever!
And the ball goes up and the ball comes down  
Swings his bat all the way around  
The world's so still you can hear the sound  
The baseball falls to the ground  

Now the little boy doesn't say a word  
Picks up his ball, he is undeterred  
Says I am the greatest there has ever been  
And he grits his teeth and he tries it again  

And the ball goes up and the ball comes down  
Swings his bat all the way around  
The world's so still you can hear the sound  
The baseball falls to the ground  

He makes no excuses, He shows no fears  
He just closes his eyes and listens to the cheers  

Little boy, he adjusts his hat  
Picks up his ball, stares at his bat  
Says I am the greatest the game is on the line  
And he gives his all one last time  

And the ball goes up like the moon so bright  
Swings his bat with all his might  
And the world's so still as still can be  
And the baseball falls, and that's strike three  

Now it's supper time and his mama calls  
Little boy starts home with his bat and ball  
Says I am the greatest that is a fact...  

But even I didn't know I could pitch like that

Loki is a dog and Alex is a boy. On their many adventures together, we get to experience the world through each of their eyes. Loki sees the world in black and white...looking up at Alex and enjoying every minute of their time together. Alex thinks he’s being extra nice when he helps Loki go down the slide, but Loki’s cry of HELLLLLP PPP, MEEEEEE, ALEXXXX! and a photograph of the inside of the slide with the world flying by make you realize that Loki doesn’t think it’s that much fun! Big hugs on the last page show how much this boy and dog care for each other even though they do see things a little differently.

One of my very favorite books, this is gentle story about a young boy named John and how he learns to view the world through the eyes of his blind grandfather. He experiences the world through all of his senses and explores a new way of looking at things. Grandpa knows the wind is blowing from the south because he can feel it. John sees the way the tops of the
trees lean. Laying in bed at night, when the dark is for everyone, John hears all the night sounds and thinks about the way he can look through grandpa’s eyes. The illustrations are a perfect compliment to the simple text.

**Story Analysis:**

**Holistic Analysis:** This collection of works comprises a set because of the underlying element of change in perspective. These changes might be based on what the character or audience sees in a physical object or picture, how one feels about oneself, or how one relates to others. Perspective is defined in many ways.

- A view or vista.
- A mental view or outlook.
- The appearance of objects in depth as perceived by normal binocular vision.
- The relationship of aspects of a subject to each other and to a whole: a perspective of history; a need to view the problem in the proper perspective.
- Subjective evaluation of relative significance; a point of view: the perspective of the displaced homemaker.
- The ability to perceive things in their actual interrelations or comparative importance: tried to keep my perspective throughout the crisis.

Each of these works has a thread of some kind of change in perspective. The citations are listed in an order developed to take the audience from the external visual changes, to internal changes within oneself, and ending with the ability to see things through the eyes of another. The building up from external to internal gradually introduces the audience to this holistic outlook on the way these works are related.

Beginning with Optical Illusions provides a tangible way to demonstrate how things can be different when looked at from different perspectives. This is the underlying theme of Optical Illusion Magic and Look Book. The creators have provided visual illustrations of how the same thing can be perceived differently.
In the *Look Book*, Tana Hoban provides the reader with full page illustrations that are first only revealed through a small opening. The reader tried to figure out what the picture is by looking at only one part of it. Often the reader discovers it is difficult to recognize the pictures, even of common objects. The perspective changes when the entire photo is revealed by turning the page.

Ann Jonas cleverly designed *Reflections* so that it first is read right-side up, and then turned around and read upside down. The picture that was one thing becomes another when the book is inverted. The reader is taken to a new place when they look at the picture from this new perspective.

The next two works, *Just Imagine* and *The Squiggle*, both involve using the imagination to “see” an object as many different things. In *Just Imagine* a little girl finds a stick. To her it becomes a composer’s baton, an artist’s brush, or an oar for her kayak. The Squiggle involves another little girl whose imagination turns a squiggle of a sidewalk into fireworks, a storm cloud, and the moon.

The poem, “Robert, Who is Often a Stranger to Himself,” was selected to help the audience begin to transition into introspection. How we perceive ourselves greatly affects our life and often our happiness. This is illustrated in Eric Carle’s *The Mixed-Up Chameleon* and the Hans Christian Andersen tale *The Ugly Duckling*. Both the chameleon and the swan experienced happiness when they learned who they were.

In 1999, Kenny Rogers recorded the song, “The Greatest.” Throughout the song the audience believes that that boy isn’t batting too well...it’s a mystery why he considers himself the greatest when none of his swings make contact with the bat. Then the audience is invited into the boy’s perspective when they hear him say, “I am the greatest that is a fact. But even I didn't know I could pitch like that.” His perspective changes the entire situation.
"Loki & Alex" takes the audience to another place. They’re no longer looking at the external changes in the environment or the internal changes within oneself. The author of this book invites the audience to see the story from two perspectives, that of the boy and the dog.

Lastly, a young boy experiences the world through the eyes of his blind grandfather in Patricia MacLachlan’s "Through Grandpa’s Eyes." He learns that there are many ways to "see" things.

**Archetype Analysis:**

The goal of compiling this collection was to bring the audience to a place where they can recognize changes in perspective, whether those changes are external or internal. The first few works in the collection do not have characters that go through a change in perspective. They were selected to demonstrate physically what it means to look at things in different ways. They each help the audience learn that things aren’t always the way they appear to be. Hopefully, this brings them to a place where their imagination can take them to places the way Quin could with her stick in "Just Imagine" or the schoolgirl could in "The Squiggle.”

The child in the poem by Gwendolyn Brooks looks in the mirror and although he sees a child who looks like him, it seems to be a stranger as well. How many times we all feel this way. Perhaps we don’t like what we see. We look around us and want the qualities that others have, like that poor mixed up chameleon in Eric Carle’s book. "The Ugly Duckling" thought he was ugly because he compared himself to others around him and listened to their criticism. When he learned who he really was, he could see himself as beautiful. This type of change in perspective in stories can help the audience consider how they see themselves. Like the little boy in Kenny Roger’s songs, we might very well be the greatest and we don’t even know it!

The audience, rather than the characters, is invited to see things differently in "Loki & Alex." In a fun way, it presents a story from two perspectives, allowing the audience to realize that different characters can view the exact same situation in different ways. Throughout our lives, we live in a world where we constantly are interacting with others. When we realize that our perspective is not the only one, it makes it easier to get along with others and recognize differences.

In "Through Grandpa’s Eyes," John tells us he likes his Grandpa’s house best. It’s his favorite because he gets to see it through his grandpa’s eyes. John understands that we don’t all see things the same way. He says it like this: “Grandpa is blind. He doesn’t see the house the way I do. He has his own way of seeing.” The sun wakes John up with its brightness; it wakes Grandpa with its warmth. Throughout the book, Grandpa asks John to close his eyes to experience different things. His ears, nose, mouth, and skin communicate so much that he really is able to see what his Grandpa does. Grandpa says Nana’s
voice smiles to him...John hears her smile, too, when looking through grandpa’s eyes.

**Style Analysis:**
One of the most noticeable things about this collection is the variety of ways this theme is communicated. Sometimes it’s very obvious. The pictures in the optical illusions book invite the reader to consider the possibilities...what is it? Is it what I think it is? What else can I see? The Look Book instantly rewards the audience with a broader perspective by turning the page after experiencing a taste of the illustration through the small hole. In the same way, Reflections provides a quick turn-around in perspective when the book is flipped. Things that the reader couldn’t see one way, are clearly identified from the new perspective.

The authors of *Just Imagine* and *The Squiggle* each took a very familiar object and presented it in a variety of ways through the imagination of a young girl. Although the idea behind each book is similar, the illustrations are very different. *Just Imagine* shows and illustration of what is really happening with a picture on the opposing page of what is going on in her imagination. The pictures are bright and colorful. In *The Squiggle*, there is a strong Chinese influence in both the illustrations and the type that was chosen. The red squiggle is contrasted with a brown paper background.

Young Robert, who looks in the mirror and sees a stranger, is presented through a very short poem. In just a few words the author is able to communicate just how he feels, perhaps because his experience is probably common to many of its readers. Although both the *Ugly Duckling* and *The Mixed-Up Chameleon* are about how an animal perceives himself, the stories are presented in different ways. *The Ugly Duckling* is a more serious story. It's easy for the audience to feel sorry for the young swan as others ridicule him. The pictures are soft and muted colors. Eric Carle’s style is very different. He uses bright, bold, colorful illustrations. The chameleon’s attempts to be something he is not makes for a very silly story, but not without a serious message. Both stories communicate about the importance of how one perceives oneself, yet they are able to do it in a way unique to the particular illustrator.

Country Music often tells stories and many communicate valuable messages. The songwriter first presents the story from an outside perspective, letting us decide about what we think is happening as the boy tries time and time again to hit the ball with no hits. Then the final chorus fills us in...as a pitcher that boy has achieved a “no-hitter.” He is “the greatest.” This story was prevented powerfully as a song, with very simple, repetitive lyrics.

The author of *Loki & Alex* uses his photography skills to show some of the changes in perspective. On each double-paged spread, the same situation is presented visually and through text from the perspective of each character. The dog is on the right, the boy on the left. The boy sees in color, the dog in black.
and white. In the credits he admits it was quite a challenge to photograph a boy and a dog!

*Through Grandpa’s Eyes* is such a simple story, yet it’s message is so powerful. Patricia MacLachlan tells the story using a lot of dialogue between the boy and his grandpa. She uses some repetition such as when Grandpa asks John to close his eyes to “see” and how in each situation John tells us what he sees with his eyes and then what he sees through Grandpa’s eyes.

**Summary:**

One of the greatest challenges for me in completing this process was narrowing down the selection of materials. There were so many examples of excellent works that represented the ideas I was seeking. I started with a foundation of books that I had enjoyed with my students and my own children. Then I began to explore our school and local libraries. I soon realized that I would need to narrow my choices to a particular age group in order to keep this project within a reasonable scope. I selected materials that could be used with primary age children. In the future I would like to develop similar collections for other age groups.

Because I chose a theme that could be considered rather vague, I had to be especially careful not to go out on tangents and try to connect books and stories that didn’t have a strong tie to one another. It was okay if the theme was subtle. It just had to be a major component of the work. I chose to present my collection in a progressive way that gradually introduced the audience to the theme. That helped me choose which items to use as I attempted to touch on various levels.

I could have worked on this project for a very long time. It was very interesting. It was hard to stop and put it all together because the exploration was so much fun. I plan to use the materials in this collection to develop a story time that I will present in an interview next Tuesday. I have applied to be a children’s librarian for the Vancouver Public Libraries and will be delighted to use the skills I developed throughout this course, and particularly through this project, as I venture out into a new career. I’m starting to see things differently already...