Jill Kedersha McClay is an Associate Professor in the Department of Elementary Education, University of Alberta, Canada. She teaches courses in language and literacy, with a particular focus upon young adolescent writers and readers. Her current research involves young adolescents who write in a variety of media.

Jill Kedersha McClay

"Wait a second . . .": Negotiating Complex Narratives in *Black and White*

Macaulay, *Black and White*

Children encounter the postmodern at every turn in their fictional worlds. While many adults see the postmodern as a departure from or a comment on "tradition" in literature, it *is* the tradition that children meet on television and in movies. Even such familiar television programs as "Sesame Street" use doubling, intertextuality, and other metafictive devices that children readily "get." By the time they graduate to Saturday cartoons or the "Simpsons," children have digested a diet of contemporary literary devices, seemingly without regard for boundaries between child and adult palettes; the children's television cartoon "Casper," for example, has parodied that standard-bearer of adult tastes, Martha Stewart. The tacit knowledge that children gain through visual media also enhances their readings of print literature, enhancement that adults may undervalue or miss entirely.

In this article, I consider some aspects of contemporary picture books that can be especially engaging for readers young and old, and then report a study of readers of various ages who read and discussed David Macaulay's boundary-breaking picture book *Black and White* (1990), the 1991 Caldecott Medal winner. After reading and discussing the book in the same circumstances as the young readers, the adult readers also considered its teaching potential and suitability for young readers. What implications should librarians, teachers, and teacher educators draw from these readings? What aspects of postmodern fiction are readily comprehended through visual and textual information? How should we work with postmodern fiction in classrooms, and how does such literature affect our readings of more tradi-

tionally structured fictions? I report several of the strategies that the readers in this study used, and finally, consider questions of concern that these readings raise for adults who are interested in children's reading.

A brief description of David Macaulay's *Black and White* will provide a context for understanding the complexity of the book and of readers' tasks as they engage with it. *Black and White* is a work that poses several challenges typical of postmodern metafiction. Readers are explicitly invited to construct meaning from this story or stories, as Macaulay invites us to decide whether the work is one or four stories. Visually, the book is presented in four distinct graphic styles, with each two-page spread offering readers four styles and seemingly different stories. The title page alerts readers to the challenge of the book, with a red-boxed warning:

> *WARNING: This book appears to contain a number of stories that do not necessarily occur at the same time. Then again, it may contain only one story. In any event, careful inspection of both words and pictures is recommended.*

Following the title page, the next double-page spread has four quadrants, each of which serves as a title for one of the four stories: "Seeing Things" (top left quadrant), "Problem Parents" (bottom left), "A Waiting Game" (top right), and "Udder Chaos" (bottom right). As the book proceeds, the four quadrants, at first seemingly so distinct from one another, begin to bleed and blur together, dissolving completely, and finally reestablishing their boundaries. Are the stories connected? Is the book one narrative written in four perspectives, or four narratives? How should a reader proceed through the book—one graphic style at a time, or one complete double page at a time, or some mixture of strategies? Recurring intertextual and visual joke references abound. Holstein cows, train journeys, a robber in disguise, parents, and children figure vibrantly in plot and characterization across the four narratives. Recurring narrative and visual motifs resonate throughout the book, sometimes with the narrative motif from one story becoming a visual motif in another: The snowflakes from "Seeing Things," for example, "fall" into "Problem Parents" as torn newspapers and appear again in "A Waiting Game," and recur in "Udder Chaos" as abstract "cow" shapes.

The illustration styles match the textual narratives, with four distinct visual styles gradually intermingling and blurring, then reasserting themselves. The uses of colour and line are distinct in each quadrant. "Seeing Things" is depicted in misty watercolours, with the characters defined by a few brushstrokes of naturalistic, muted colour. The more clearly defined pen-and-ink lines of "Problem Parents" use black,

browns, and white to give a sepia effect. In the two right-hand page quadrants, colours are more vibrant, with "A Waiting Game" drawn with a broad range of colours and definite contour lines. The abstract shapes of cows and people in "Udder Chaos" use solid colours with almost no shading.

Visually as well as narratively, boundaries are transgressed and transformations occur. As the visual styles blur together, the book goes to black and white, with the respective colour and line styles reestablished before the end of the narratives. Each quadrant transforms as well.[1] The soft-focus watercolours of "Seeing Things" give way to sharply defined words on paper scraps; the visual point of view changes energetically in "Problem Parents"; the full colour but static train station comes to life through the confetti of black and white newspaper in "A Waiting Game"; and the shapes in "Udder Chaos" fragment into increasingly abstract images. Needless to say, the visual elements of the book alone are worthy of a full study.

Picture Books and Children

Scieszka and Smith, *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*

Mamet and Sultan, *Warm and Cold*

Wiesner, *Tuesday*

Wiesner, *June 29, 1999*

Lewis, "The constructedness of texts: Picture books and the metafictive"

In print media, picture books provide a means of exploring children's abilities to understand the postmodern. The playful, parodic qualities of much of postmodern fiction are given visual license by such successful authors and illustrators as Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith (*The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales,* 1992, for example), David Mamet and Donald Sultan (*Warm and Cold,* 1988), and David Wiesner (*Tuesday,* 1991; *June 29, 1999,* 1992). By their very nature, picture books demand a dialogic reading of text and illustration, and inventive authors play with this dialogue to enhance doubled readings. Three postmodern qualities that picture books regularly exploit are the boundary breaking of direct authorial address and shifting of narrative levels, excess of detail, and paradoxically, an indeterminacy of text stemming from too little detail (Lewis, 1996).

Such intriguing picture books may be especially interesting for many children, whose grasp of the "taken-for-granted" both in fiction and in the world around them is not yet secure. When young children encounter picture books, their understanding of the conventions of narrative in print and other media is still evolving and tenuous. As David Lewis (1996) observes, "The picture book too is in close communion with the still-evolving and the incomplete, and its open-ended quality arises from contact with the developing world of the young child" (p. 272).

Lewis notes that what counts as reading, what counts as a book, and what counts as story are still open questions for children. Excellent

authors and illustrators of picture books know this and seed their fictional works with a sense of the ambiguity and wonder of fictional worlds. We read the pictures through the words and the words through the pictures, making picture books dialogic in a Bakhtinian sense. For adults, too, this sense of wonder at our contemporary fictional worlds is not an uncommon sentiment. The transgressiveness of such fiction may be the intriguing aspect for adults. In postmodern fiction, what counts as a book or a story is once again an open question for adults, one that can be explored fruitfully in a picture book with children.

Black and White as Prototype

Both traditional print books and online narratives offer readers a variety of reading advantages. Much of the discussion of print and online technology, however, has been rather mired in an either/or perspective; print is seen as offering stable, linear narratives, while online technology offers more obvious choices, ambiguity, and multiple pathways (Wells, 1997). *Black and White,* in its simultaneous presentation of four narratives, offers both the stability and linearity of traditional print media with the ambiguity and multiple pathways of online me-

Wells, "Virtual textuality"

dia. With the intricacy and centrality of the illustrations, moreover, it also offers the same qualities in visual design as in words. In this "best of both fictional worlds," the book offers readers, regardless of their level of sophistication or fluency with literary texts, support and encouragement to cross and re-cross the boundaries of print and online media. Kate Dresang and Kate McClelland (1995), members of the Caldecott committee that selected Macaulay's tour de force as its medal winner, claim:

> We have come to realize that *Black and White* is a prototype. On the one hand, a prototype of the picture book; on the other hand, the prototype of literature for a young person of the electronic age. It is the embodiment of profound and unalterable change in literature for young people. Understanding *Black and White* is a journey toward understanding literature in relation to how children approaching a new millennium are thinking and perceiving. (p. 704).

Dresang and McClelland

Reading *Black and White*

I asked approximately 45 readers of various ages (7, 10, and 12, and adults) to read and discuss Macaulay's *Black and White;* approximately 20 children and 25 adults participated. The reading/discussion events were set up to be social and "untaught." Readers read in groups of two to four participants; the children read with others of their age, and the adults read together with other adults. The adult readers were either preservice or practising teachers. No researcher or teacher figure posed questions, guided reading, or suggested reading procedures beyond asking participants to read and talk about the book.

Negotiating the Social Act of Reading

Because I framed the reading events of this study to encourage social reading and discussion, it is not surprising that the readers needed first of all to negotiate a way to proceed through *Black and White.* Several aspects concerning the social engagement with literature and other readers are worth highlighting. The first task for the readers was to negotiate the act of reading. Each group of readers, regardless of age, engaged in some explicit negotiation of the reading, with readers of all ages having definite ideas about the best way to proceed. Two general possibilities are quickly apparent when considering the text and graphic styling of *Black and White:*

- read one story at a time, for example, following "Seeing Things" from the beginning to the end of the book and then starting back on the first page again with one of the remaining three stories.

• read each complete double-page spread before moving on to
   the next double-page spread.

Within this latter option, readers can choose to begin with any single
story and proceed in the same order through the other three stories,
or they can begin each double-page spread with whichever story
catches their fancy. Most readers, obedient to the linear tradition of
English in print, read in accordance with the convention of left page
top-to-bottom, right page top-to-bottom, beginning with "Seeing
Things," and proceeding through "Problem Parents," "A Waiting
Game," and "Udder Chaos" in regular order. The youngest partici-
pants, all of whom were fluent independent readers, were adamant
that this was the "correct" procedure.

Some readers, however, felt more at liberty to allow a graphic style to
suggest reading order. These readers also read each double-page
spread before moving to the next, but began, for example, with "Ud-
der Chaos" (bottom right quadrant) because of its strong abstract
style. Several adult readers who have training or special interest in art
or graphic design varied the order of their reading page by page,
beginning with whichever graphic style most attracted them on that
particular page. These readers let the graphics lead them, using text
as a follow-up to the graphics. Interestingly, in *Black and White* the
details of the illustrations offer stronger interpretive pathways than
the text for establishing the connections among the four stories.

Each of these various reading procedures was equally productive for
individuals, provided that the readers were happy using it. A group of
four children in grade 4 voted democratically on which story to begin
with, and then had a run-off ballot when two stories tied. The only
difficulties within the reading groups came when members could not
agree on a common way of reading. In several instances, the groups
split and used multiple copies of the book for the reading, and re-
joined to talk about the book afterward. In one group, the readers
remained together, but the adult who had preferred a different read-
ing order was clearly unhappy during the reading, and she joined the
discussion only after she spent several minutes alone with the book
after the others had read through it once.

A Reading Strategy to Order

Emma[2] and Roxanne, age 7, hunch over the book, reading intently.
Emma initially directs Roxanne in their approach:

Emma: You can read "Seeing Things" and go like that, that, and read
   the same part of the page all the time.

Roxanne: OK.

Emma: Or, we can go blah, blah, blah, [indicating reading through all the page]. It won't make any sense whatsoever.

Roxanne: How about we go blah, blah, blah. and then blah blah blah—[indicating reading each of the four quadrants]—the way we read a normal book.

Emma: OK.

Roxanne: You read a paragraph and I'll read a paragraph.

Emma: [reading text] "It was the boy's first trip alone. . . ."

The two girls took turns, each reading the text of one quadrant of the double-page spreads. When there was no text in a quadrant, the reader described the illustration. Whether this was for the benefit of the tape recorder or for the symmetry and fairness of their reading routine, I do not know. On the third double-page spread, without any prior discussion or commentary on their strategy, the two girls began to "announce" the title of each story as they read. In the book itself, the individual story titles do not appear again after the page where all four titles were shown, but the two girls faithfully announced the title on each page from this point on.

Meek, *How Texts Teach What Readers Learn*

This reading strategy, developed spontaneously in seemingly unthinking response to a reading challenge, seems ideally suited to help these young readers keep control over this complex story or stories. As Meek (1988) famously claimed, "texts teach what readers learn." Emma and Roxanne, having negotiated their procedure for reading, then developed a reading strategy appropriate to their needs. These young readers had not encountered a written story like *Black and White* before, but they quickly learned one important lesson that aided their comprehension and enjoyment. While all the readers worked hard to connect and delineate the four stories that may or may not be unified in *Black and White,* these readers created a method for keeping the stories "straight" in their minds during the reading. Most of the groups of readers took turns in reading the story quadrants, but Emma and Roxanne kept a constant reminder of the titles of each story, ostensibly with an implicit understanding that titles matter. This strategy, while keeping their reading focused, presumably aided comprehension as well. Indeed, for the sheer pleasure of the reading, these two seven-year olds outdid most older readers— their reading was punctuated by giggles, cries of "this is hilarious!" as the textual chaos erupts, and the girls' lively word play in sing-song voices. Whether the strategy will serve them in reading other stories in the future is immaterial—this particular story inspired a strategy uniquely suited to it and to their needs. At seven years of age, Emma

and Roxanne are clearly responsive, inventive, and capable readers who can leapfrog from this strategy to others as the occasion and text suggest.

Interpretive Turns

In addition to deciding *how* to proceed with the reading, readers also needed to negotiate *when* to interpret their reading. Chloe and Sonya, two grade 6 students, were happy to read together but grew impatient as it became apparent that they were not in sync in the timing of their interpretation. As Chloe began to catch on to the connections among the stories, she needed to talk about them; Sonya, however, still unready to interpret, wanted to continue reading longer without discussion. The impatience each girl felt at the mismatch in the timing of their interpretation is evident in the following three excerpts:

Chloe: I think I get it! They're like all reading the newspapers and—

Sonya: yeah, but the story's not over.

————

Chloe: [Reading] ". . . standing in the middle of a blizzard."—Ohh, these people, they're like—newspapers are getting all ripped up, and that's what he thinks is the blizzard, and it—the snow—connects with the other story too.

Sonya: Wait a second. . . . [continues reading]

Chloe: [quietly, almost to herself] Hmm, well, I think I know what's going on.

————

Sonya: [Reading] ". . . is that no matter how far they go, they always come back to be milked."—OK. So I think I know what's going on here.

Chloe: Yeah, me, too.

Sonya: See, 'cause what happens is you start with this one, you've got the four. These are all stories, there's "Seeing Things," and then it's every first block, see?

Chloe: Yeah, I knew that.

Sonia and Chloe continue to interpret, making observations that connect the visual and textual elements. The mismatch that began their interpretive turn continues, however, as Chloe's observations forge ahead of Sonya's. Twice in the following excerpt Sonya attempts to close off the interpretation, while Chloe continues with excitement.

In the final line, again, Sonya gets caught up by the connections she sees, and then she continues for several minutes longer:

Chloe: It's also like there's all these cows and burglars and stuff. But it can also be like one story because here . . . um . . . they're like reading newspapers, and then—their parents come home wearing newspapers and then—this one the cows are like the boulders and then . . . um . . .

Sonya: You might have a point.

Chloe: —and then this one . . . there was like . . . one of them says something about the choir and then there are these cows in the choir. And then . . .

Sonya: Huh? I've lost you. I suppose we're done—

Chloe: OK. And then like everybody has newspapers, and then, at the end you know how they're wearing them and then they start wearing them.

Sonya: [flipping through book] And there's like these boulders, well, I suppose we figured it out. Guess we're done.

Chloe: Also here, there's like newspapers shredded up, and here it said about newspapers being shredded up, and here they're all wearing newspapers and—

Sonya: —and then somewhere there's snowflakes . . .

Sonya provides a reminder in these excerpts that the solitary moment is needed sometimes in reading, regardless of the value of the social construction of meaning. When the two girls were both ready to interpret, they added to each other's observations with enthusiasm.

Scaffolding Construction of Meaning

From the seven-year-old readers to the adults, the readers scaffolded each other's construction of meaning. The following fourth-grade readers (10 years old), like those in other groups, found Macaulay's picture book challenging and intriguing. They seized visual and textual cues, amassing evidence to support an interpretation, delighting in the intricacies they discovered even as the "ultimate" answer to the question of whether the book comprises four stories or one eluded them.

Ike: I don't think he's the robber. Even with the light.

Katie: Look at the robber. [laughing]

Ike: I don't think he's the robber. I think he's just trying to blend in with the cows so they don't run away with him. I think he is the farmer trying to catch his cows.

Allie: I don't think so.

Katie: Me either. I think he's the robber. He has a face mask on.

Without explicit teacherly directions or guidance for reading the book, readers relied on their observations, adding to one another's interpretations, arguing interpretations by citing evidence from the text and illustrations, and drawing on their knowledge of other media. They used a conventional arsenal of reading strategies—they predicted, inferred from text and illustrations, played with words, read and re-read—building their interpretations jointly. When this fourth-grade group decided to read one story at a time, they could not sustain this decision because they kept noticing visual connections with other stories. Their recursive reading and conversation wove back and forth among stories with delight and with intention, circling around questions where there was disagreement or confusion. These children delighted in the re-readings because their discoveries brought rich interpretive payoffs.

The scaffolding and the children's use of background knowledge in other media are evident in the following excerpt, as is the accompanying sense of discovery as the group reaches the end of the book.

Amber: I think I got something! I think I got something. At the end of the book, it shows someone picking this up. It shows a train, I think that it might be a game. It's called "The Waiting Game," and there are two things like stuffed lions or something back there [indicating behind the train station on the page].

Ike: I think those things are blending in with the background, like trees or something.

Katie: But a game board can't move. Like here there's a person [train conductor] and here [turning pages] he's gone. It can't be a game board.

Amber: Can't people just take them off?

Katie: But if it's painted onto the board they can't.

———

Dave: Look, now the dog's playing with the train. I think that the dog is playing with the train and that's why it is coming. I think Amber was right. Remember when she talked about the first page and see it, there's a house with a train. That's the same train!

Amber: At the end, someone picked the house up with a dog.

Ike: Yeah, it's a model, I'm pretty sure.

Katie: Oh yeah.

Dave: Let's go in the very front and see if there is one there.

Allie: There's the train.

[All notice the train throughout text.]

Ike: In "Seeing Things," he's in a train.

Katie: So it *is* like a game.

Even the youngest of the readers, Emma and Roxanne, make use of their knowledge of film terminology and the concept of a close-up to interpret the illustrations:

Emma: Wait! This is a close-up of the cow.

Roxanne: Then there's a really *big* close-up of the cow's head.

Dombey, "Learning the language of books"

Fox, "Talking like a book: Young children's oral monologues"

Researchers have long charted the knowledge of narrative and literary structure that pre-readers develop from early experiences of being read to (Dombey, 1983; Fox, 1983). Emma and Roxanne, like their fourth-grade counterparts, have clearly learned literary lessons from media other than print, lessons which inform their constructions of meaning when they begin to meet literary forms in print that they already engage with in other media.

Teachers and Children Reading

What implications do these readings and readers raise for teachers and librarians? Throughout discussions with preservice and experienced teachers who read the book, I found that the adults often underrated children's abilities to understand, much less enjoy it. They tended to think that the book is suitable for junior high readers and older, though several teachers thought perhaps "really advanced" grade 6 readers would do well. Their comments frequently justified these opinions by referring to the difficulty that *they* had with the book, their reliance on reading partners for collaborative meaning-making, and their conclusion that such scaffolding is beyond the reach of younger children. One teacher noted that elementary school children would not cope well with the book because "*I* needed to read it again, and have my group's discussion, to see things that I missed the first time," a comment that brought nods from others. The assumption, stated or implicit, was that re-reading was a mark of inadequacy and that "hard is bad."

Yet the young readers consistently reveal the reverse. In many cases, particularly with the grade 4 and 6 readers, their abilities to make connections across the stories arose from their attention to the visual jokes and intertextuality of the stories; their delight stemmed from

their discoveries when they linked pieces of a narrative puzzle. The challenge was a large part of the fun. Re-reading was neither a chore nor a sign of inadequacy—they rightly knew that this book requires "careful inspection," as Macaulay recommends in his warning.

Scieszka, "Interview with Jon Scieszka"

Jon Scieszka (1998) has suggested that adolescents are more sophisticated visual readers of his books than are adults, cueing into the visual jokes and references more attentively than their elders. Similarly, these transcripts of children and adults reading *Black and White* parallel his claim. Even the young children read it with intent to make meaning, and their efforts were handsomely rewarded. The wildly noisy and playful illustrations seemed to give license to young readers to play along and not worry much about interpretations; this playfulness is rewarded in rich interpretations. One group of adults, intensely bent on establishing a coherent overarching unity, constructed an elaborate dream framework to explain the four narratives. Watching them at work, I could only think that they were missing out on the fun that the children found in the book. Margaret Meek (1988) notes that "sometimes a joke is the best reading test" (p. 9). Or the best incentive to continue reading.

Meek, *How Texts Teach What Readers Learn*

Scieszka, "Interview with Jon Scieszka"

Smith, *Reading Without Nonsense*

Scieszka (1998) also comments on the feeling of being part of what Frank Smith (1985) has called "the literacy club" through humour and parody. Recalling his love of *Mad* magazine and *Rocky and Bullwinkle,* Scieszka notes, "You knew something funny was going on there, even if you only understood half of the jokes. But it inspired you to go find out what the rest of those jokes were, and look up things that they mentioned." Scieszka, Macaulay, and other writers who refuse to write at the lowest common denominator in humour or literary technique offer children valuable literacy lessons. Perhaps adults, with the best intentions, sometimes deprive authors of the opportunity to teach children direct and powerful reading lessons.

Dresang and McClelland, "*Black and white*: A journey"

Dresang and McClelland (1995) note that *Black and White* "appeals to the resourcefulness of the reader" (p. 708). In this reading event, readers' resourcefulness was increased by the social context, which encouraged scaffolding in the construction of meaning. Just as Dresang and McClelland conclude that Macaulay's book is "greater than the sum of its parts," so, too, may teachers conclude that readers constructing a text together can be greater than the sum of the individuals. The lack of content direction for the reading event allowed readers to build interpretations by recursive, digressive pathways of their own making. One group of fourth-grade readers included a boy who almost immediately focused upon the "black-and-white" qualities and puns in the book, exclaiming while reading the red-boxed warning on the title page, "Hey! It's black and white and red—black and

white and read all over!" This keen observation allowed his entire group to appreciate many of the visual jokes on their first reading, as the appearance of black and white objects on the pages does indeed help readers to make connections among the stories.

As readers interpreted and discussed the book, most realized the importance of the illustrations for connecting the four stories. As Scieszka noted, adolescents tend to read the illustrations in his books more carefully than do adults, and his generalization is borne out by the readers in this study. Meek (1988) discusses adults' tendencies to make one kind of reading do for all, and that as we become more experienced in reading, we can become less skilled (p. 35). Some such limitation seems to have occurred for some of the adult readers who are thoroughly grounded in a tradition of text superiority over illustrations. One experienced teacher, for example, noted, "I wasn't really looking at the pictures at first, until the others [in her reading group] started pointing things out. But that's where you get the connections."

Meek, *How Texts Teach What Readers Learn*

In an age in which reading is increasingly rooted in multimedia forms, the implications for teachers and librarians are clear. Reading teachers and librarians who wish to promote children's reading development cannot become complacent about literacy skills gained and refined in print-based media. The need for adults to continue to learn new strategies and to re-learn old ones is essential as new forms of texts make different demands on readers of all ages. Additionally, successful teaching requires that teachers be able to appreciate and build on the depth and breadth of strategies that their students actually use. When Dresang writes of a "radical change" (1999) in the ways in which literature is presented in handheld book format, she cites Macaulay's works as exemplars of this change. Teachers and others who promote reading need to account for these changes.

Dresang, *Radical Change*

The teacher groups (including me) were consistently surprised to learn of other readers' preferences. In solitary reading, the reading process itself is easily taken for granted, but with the *Black and White* reading groups, the combination of a social situation and a text that problematizes the act of reading foregrounded the idea that the act of reading should not be taken for granted. When teachers realized that others in their groups chose to read differently, and indeed, were seriously impeded in their reading if they attempted to conform to another way of reading, they saw the implications for children in their classrooms. Diane, a teacher who read in the traditional text progression of left page top-to-bottom, right page top-to-bottom, at first shook her head in mock disbelief at her colleague Annette's explanation of her preferred reading order. Annette, trained in graphic

design, followed her attraction to the graphic style of "Udder Chaos" (bottom right quadrant), reading that quadrant first on each double-page spread and then proceeding on to whichever other quadrant grabbed her eye. Diane acknowledged somewhat ruefully that she would have discouraged a child who attempted to read the book in such order, but she also realized in their discussions that Annette's attention to the illustrations had enabled her to key in more closely to the narrative connections than she had done on her own.

Reading the Positive and Negative Spaces

In his acceptance speech for the Caldecott Medal, David Macaulay (1991) spoke about the need for viewers and readers to discern what appears and what is "undrawn" in texts:

> In picture making, that which is undrawn is referred to as 'negative space,' and it is essential to read both the positive and the negative spaces together to fully understand the image. (p. 342)

The ability to read what is not written in literature is a skill that can be developed quite young and is useful, indeed essential, in adult reading. Whether readers solve an Agatha Christie mystery (Mackey, 1991), for example, or delight in the puzzles of a Jeannette Winterson novel, our successful reading depends in large part upon the ability to "read" what is unwritten as well as what is written. In *Black and White* and in other complex contemporary picture books, the interplay of illustrations and words provides rich experiences for young readers to develop this skill. An ability to select and hone details, to determine what should be part of the positive or negative spaces is also essential to well-crafted writing.

Meek (1988) notes that readers need to learn what not to pay attention to, such as the publishing information on the title page. Writers such as David Macaulay and Jon Scieszka make us pay attention again, signaling by breaking title page conventions, for example, their intention to call narrative conventions into question. [Interestingly, the only group of readers who entirely overlooked this warning happened to be a group of adults, whose reading broke down almost completely until they began again and noticed the warning.] Macaulay's warning about the four stories—or one story—tells us directly to expect ambiguity in this book. He teaches his readers how to think about his ambiguity and does not leave the teaching to an intermediary. The publishing information pages at the beginning and end of *Black and White* convey information essential, or at least germane, to the construction of meaning possible for readers. Meek (1988) notes that a reader's move into newer, harder books depends on a tolerance for ambiguity, an understanding that patience is needed and that the au-

thor will eventually resolve the puzzles (p. 30). This tolerance marks the difference between readers who only read the same kinds of reading material and those who move on to more varied and difficult reading.

Such tolerance for ambiguity in the comfortable form of the picture book may provide a bridge between traditional print forms and newer forms of reading, known or as yet unknown. Dresang and McClelland (1995) see *Black and White* as a link with hypertext, for example. Certainly, children raised with such challenging fiction may work easily in hypertext, and vice versa. They will develop the flexibility and alertness to cues, in text or illustrations at least, to attend to an author's structure. The interplay of visual and textual elements, as well as auditory ones, is a common feature of multimedia presentations. Stewig (1995) notes that evidence exists that young children attend to design features, and he suggests that teachers can profitably pay attention to layout features in teaching young children (p. 176).

Books such as *Black and White* teach us, in Meek's words, what readers need to know. As teachers and librarians, we can teach best by letting our young readers meet such texts in situations that allow for scaffolding learning and enjoyment, without inserting ourselves unnecessarily as intermediaries, without assuming that young people need the manual to read the book. We do well to take a lesson from their use of computers—children install the program and start to play; they don't read the manual.

Margin notes:
Dresang and McClelland, "*Black and white*: A journey"

Stewig, *Looking at Picture Books*

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Notes

1. I am indebted to Michael Emme, of the Dept. of Elementary Education, University of Alberta, for helping me to see and verbalize the book's visual transformations more clearly.
2. Pseudonyms are used for all participants in this study.

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Welcome to MarchAgainstNazis! We are a community dedicated to connecting individuals who oppose the destructive policies and ideas of radical white nationalist terrorists (i.e., Nazis). Our mission is to raise awareness and facilitate constructive discussion. We'd like to emphasize antifascist unity here and discourage "purity tests" and infighting. Black and white are not considered to be colors but shades. So mixing 2 shades together would give you various shades of black depending on how much of each shade you mix. Some call this Grey. Red, Green, Blue, and Yellow are primary colors. Mixing these colors together will give you secondary colors. For example Red and Blue will give you Purple. Mixing White or Black with any primary or secondary color will give you lighter or darker shades of that color. 0. 1. NO Wait a second could it be Grey! or shades of Grey.!.or just grey.mix it up and find out.power is knowledge. 0. 1.