



English

International Children's Book Day 2025

Lessons for primary education

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This lesson includes exercises for three different age groups, based on Rian Visser's poem *'The Language of Pictures'*.

Is it possible to draw everything you hear? What pictures do you see in your mind?
Does everyone see and think the same thing?

In this lesson, students explore how words can conjure up images. And vice versa. Images can also evoke words. So, the lesson includes both writing and drawing exercises.

There is also a focus on the freedom of interpretation. The writer or artist may have different ideas about a text or picture than the reader or viewer does.
That's perfectly fine!

Have fun with the lesson.

First read the poem together.

The Language of Pictures

Can you draw pictures
for the words,
for the things I say?

Then draw
part of the picture,
cold,
wind,
a lump in your throat
or tough luck,

draw a cough,
a sigh,
the scent of fresh bread,
time,
a moment,
the beginning or the end
of a plan,

draw the place wherever,
the place where never,
the place where soon
something is going to happen,

draw the pain of a push,
the taste of the sea.

There is so much
that I want to see,
like love,
one day,
and maybe for me.

Make pictures
for my poem,
and please feel free:
these words
belong to you
even though they came from me.

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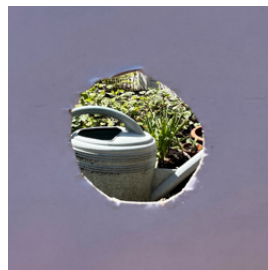
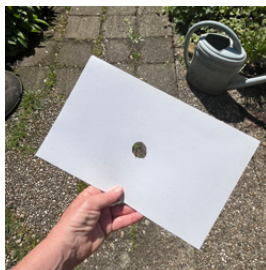


Ages 4 to 6

Part of the picture

draw part of the picture

Cut a hole of about 2 centimetres in a piece of cardboard. Ask the children to look at the classroom or the playground through the hole. How does it feel to look through a hole? Does it feel different? Can they see anything they haven't noticed before? Talk about the experience.

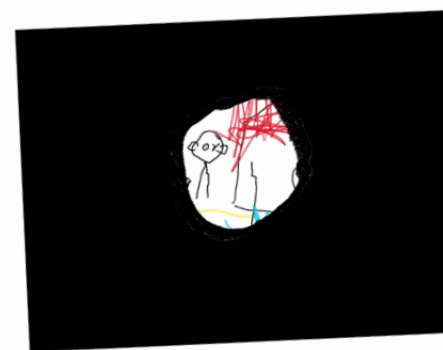


Ask the class to do a drawing of an ordinary day at school or at home.

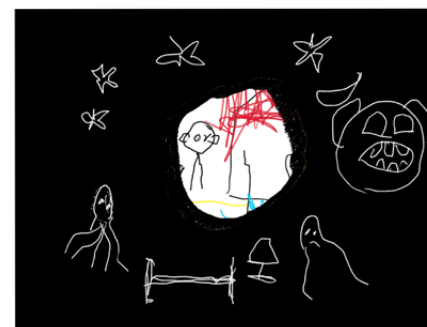


English

Give every child a piece of black paper with a hole of about 8 cm. Slide this frame over the drawing. Which part of the picture is most interesting? Stick the drawing to the frame.



Now the children can use white paint or crayons to draw on the black paper and to complete the picture. Encourage them to use their imagination and to draw things they haven't really seen.



Finished! The children have looked at part of the picture!

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Ages 6 to 9

The place wherever

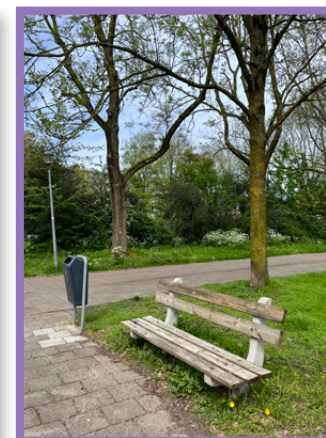
draw the place wherever,
the place where never,
the place where soon
something is going to happen,

The poem mentions a place where something is going to happen. What is going to happen? That depends on the viewer's imagination.

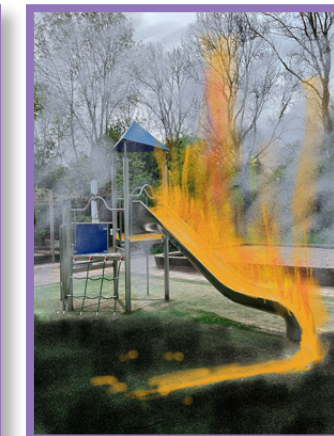
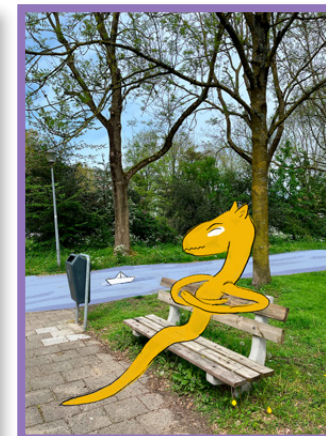
Go out with the class and look for ordinary places close to the school or in the school building. Take photographs and print them out.

Encourage the class to let their imaginations run wild and to draw and paint on the printouts. They can also work on other sheets of paper and cut out their drawings and stick them on the printouts. What could happen in this place?

Create an exhibition of the drawings. Ask students to write stories or poems to go with their artwork.



Boring photos.



But this could happen there...

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Ages 9 to 14

Make pictures for my poem

Cut out the sections of the poem that ask the reader to draw something. Hand out these sections and ask the students to draw pictures to go with them, either alone or in groups. Tell them that they are free to use their imaginations and to go with whatever the words suggest to them. It can be figurative or abstract.

maybe

the pain of a push,

one day

time

the taste of the sea

a cough

ever

a lump in your throat

the place wherever something
is going to happen

cold

tough luck

love

the scent of fresh bread

part of the picture

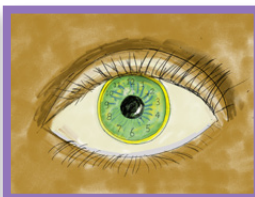
wind

the beginning or
the end of a plan

a moment

a sigh

Display the drawings. Can the students tell which pictures go with which words?



a moment

the taste of the sea

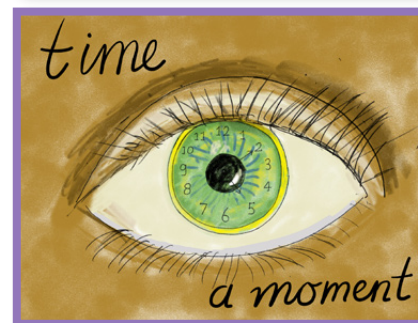
a cough

Ask them to add the words to their artwork in a creative way.

Tip: Take a look at some examples of hand lettering together.



Examples of drawings.



Now they can write their own poems to go with their drawings.

Variation: Instead of a drawing, make a clay sculpture, a piece of music or come up with a dance.

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Finally...

These lesson suggestions were created as part of International Children's Book Day 2025.

Since 1967, International Children's Book Day (ICBD) has been celebrated worldwide on or around 2 April, the date of Hans Christian Andersen's birthday.

This special day was established by IBBY to promote the love of reading and to inspire people around the world to celebrate children's books.

Each year, a different national section of IBBY is given the opportunity to be the sponsor of ICBD. The section chooses a theme and invites a prominent author from the host country to write a message to the children of the world and a well-known illustrator to design a poster.

For further information, please visit

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The Dutch poem 'Beeldtaal' was published in the collection *Alle wensen van de wereld*, 2021, Uitgeverij Leopold.

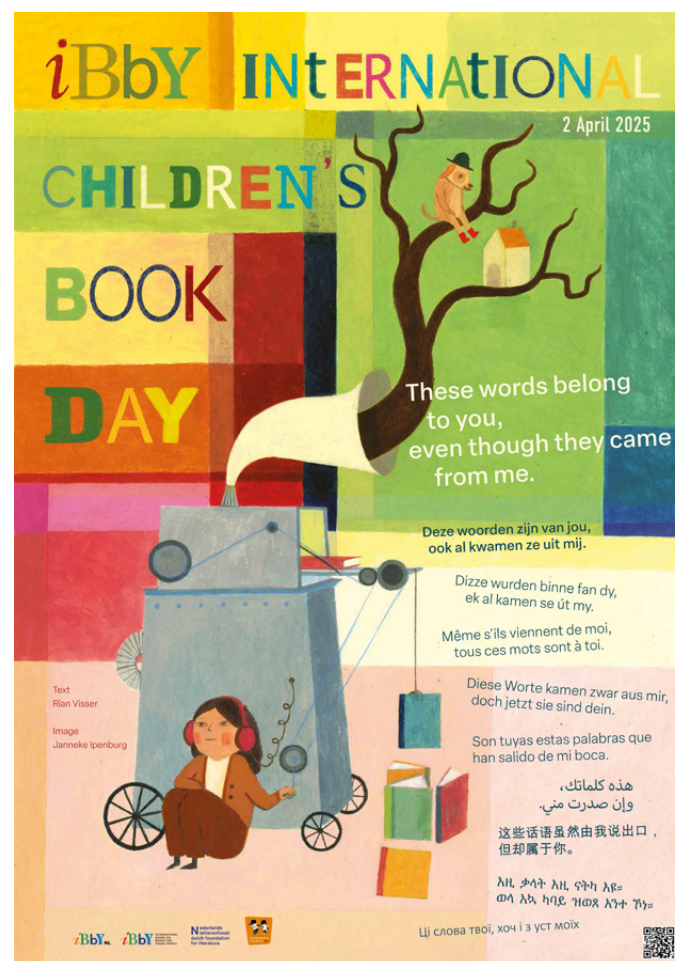
Feel free

The words of the poem also apply to these lesson suggestions. Feel free to put your own spin on the exercises. Have fun!

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