



THE anatomy of a picture book

Beyond Reading Aloud

The Dragon & the Turtle, part 1

by Donita K. Paul and Evangeline Denmark

Illustrated by Vincent Nguyen

Cover Art:

- Sparks imagination
- Mixes familiar with unfamiliar
- Arouses curiosity

Imagination: In order to comprehend the written word, a child must conjure up images, sounds, tastes, smells, and tactile experiences. Memories provide the foundation of assigning meaning to a word. The word cat brings forth memories that differ from those elicited from the word dog. Corn tastes different than spinach. If a child has tasted both, a clear distinction is branded in his memory. A dirty diaper is an unpleasant smell. Apple pie is a pleasant smell. These two words not only present an image, but often an emotion as well. All these complex reactions solidify comprehension.

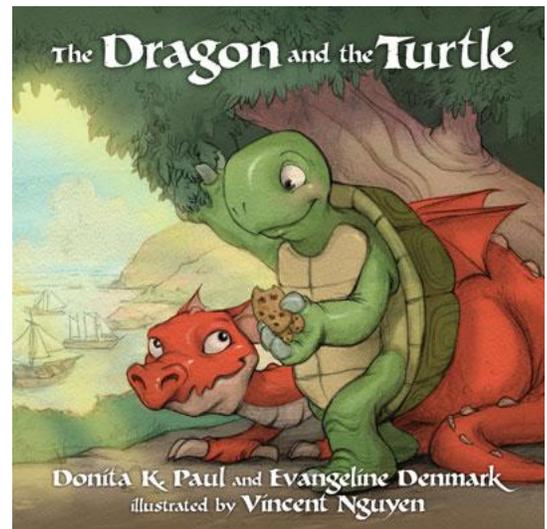
If I said to you, “Loktod tib assoramanation” you would have no comprehension. These nonsense words are not linked in memory to something concrete. Take into consideration that giraffe and escalator may sound like nonsense syllables until the child has received enough experience to establish meaning. And even after a child has seen a giraffe and an escalator, practice is needed to set those concepts firmly in place. Then if the text says the giraffe rode the escalator to the second floor, another leap of mental prowess must be made.

Children benefit from the practice of imagining. Spoken words must be associated with memories before the more complex performance of associating letters to sounds, individual sounds to words, words to meaning can take place.

Mixing familiar with unfamiliar: This activity takes first place when it is necessary to add new information to a child’s store of memories. If a child has a concept of a farm, the introduction of different animals is easier than if the backdrop is not established. The best example of this would be the flap-lifting books. The page says “where is the sheep?” and the child lifts the flap to find a woolly animal.

On the cover of *The Dragon and the Turtle*, many images are familiar to the child. The dragon is probably not. And perhaps some children are unfamiliar with the sea and ships so close to where the characters are walking. The mixture of familiar and unfamiliar helps a child assimilate new information.

Curiosity: Curiosity is behind any exploration, whether it be adventuring to new lands or turning the page in a book. Curiosity spurs a young reader on to “find out.”



Questions:

Don't ask a lot of questions, just one or two at a time. The child wants to hear the story, not be grilled. But a new question when you pick up the book is handy. These are examples to use here and to give ideas to be applied to other books.

Ask questions on different levels. Expect fact answers to some and thinking answers to others.

Fact:

- Have you ever been on a boat?
- How many cookies are in Roger's hand?

Thinking:

- Would you like to sail on a boat to Grandma's house?
- Is there water to sail on all the way from our garage to Grandma's front porch?
- What are some other ways to travel?
- Could we fly to Grandma's? Take a train?
- Does Pdraig want a cookie?
- Does Roger know he wants a cookie?
- What would you do if you had three cookies?

Even a minor part of the picture can stimulate conversation.

Fact:

- What color are the leaves on the tree?
- Is it a big or little tree?

Thinking:

- Could someone live in the tree?
- Is someone in the tree now?
- Can you imagine someone in the tree?
- What is that someone doing?

**Remember: First and foremost, a book should be enjoyed
just as a delightful time of shared satisfaction.**