

It is the first day of the school year and Luke, a first-grader, is reading a Sunshine Series book by Cutting and Cutting entitled *Are You a Ladybug?* (1988). Before Luke begins, he tells me that he really doesn't know how to read because he doesn't know all the words. With encouragement, he agrees to try. He encounters several challenges and handles them in various ways. Sometimes he pauses, looks at the pictures, goes back to the print, and sounds out the first letter of the next word. Other times, he goes back and seems to be studying the picture. For each difficult word that he encounters, Luke eventually makes an attempt. Often his attempt matches multiple sources of information including the graphophonic information that he has accessed, his current syntactic understandings, his semantic knowledge, his understandings of the picture, and his background knowledge and life experience about story and picture books.

Luke's various attempts to solve difficult words offer a view into his reading process, demonstrating how readers draw upon various sources of information in order to make a reading attempt. Many assessment tools are available to measure how students use all of these sources of information with the exception of pictures. The lack of available evidence about children's use of pictures to read is somewhat surprising, given that children who are emerging into literacy appear to make extensive use of the information provided in illustrations to help them read. In fact, Adams (1990) noted that there is virtually no available information on how beginning readers constructively use pictures to read.

Authors and illustrators of children's literature intentionally create pictures and texts that achieve a wedding of two sign systems: words and illustrations. According to Kiefer (1995), Barbara Cooney, a well-known Caldecott award winner,

likened the picture book to a string of pearls. She suggested that the pearls represent the illustrations, and the string represents the printed text. The string is an object of beauty on its own, but the necklace cannot exist without the string. Although in picture books a verbal text should certainly be beautiful and bring pleasure in and of itself, Cooney's analogy supports the idea of the interdependence of pictures and text in the unique art object that is a picture book. (p. 6)

Together the subtle weave of words and pictures allow both to tell one seamless tale (Scieszka, 1998). We also know that children are aware of this weaving of pictures and print into one story by their own writing and conversations about pictures and print (Hubbard, 1989; Yaden, Smolkin, & Conlon, 1989).

In this paper, I report the findings of a study that examines whether and how children use pictures in their reading attempts. In addition to collecting