

## Working with picture books in early childhood education and educating in values

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### Abstract

The picture book is a specific literary genre, composed of text and images in a complementary manner. It can be a valid means of approaching reading at an early age and educating in values in Early Childhood Education. The aim of this study is discover which teachers use picture books in their daily lives and their potential for educating in values. In order to prepare this article, in-depth interviews were conducted with 22 practicing teachers. After analyzing the qualitative data collected, it can be observed that all the interviewees use picture books and consider them to be a fundamental teaching material at this education stage. The participants explained different ways of using it (before, during and after reading), activities carried out, relevant titles for educating in values, possibilities and difficulties. The conclusions endorse and expand on the results of previous studies on the subject, highlighting a wide range of possibilities for picture books in the Early Childhood Education stage: the genre pleases and satisfies teachers and pupils, allows for emotional education and education in values and generates varied and relevant learning dynamics.

**Keywords:** Picture books; children's and youth literature; moral values; values education; teacher surveys; Early Childhood Education.

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## Trabajar con álbumes ilustrados en Educación Infantil y educar en valores

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### Resumen

El álbum ilustrado es un género literario específico, formado por texto e imágenes de manera complementaria. El mismo puede constituir un medio válido para acercarse a la lectura en las primeras edades y educar en valores en Educación Infantil. El objetivo de este estudio es conocer los usos que hacen de los álbumes ilustrados en su día a día los docentes y su potencial para la educación en valores. Para elaborar este artículo se han realizado entrevistas en profundidad a 22 docentes en ejercicio. Tras el análisis de los datos cualitativos recabados se observa que todos los entrevistados usan el álbum ilustrado y lo consideran un material fundamental en la etapa, exponiendo diferentes formas de utilizarlo (antes, durante y después de la lectura), actividades y dinámicas realizadas, títulos relevantes para educar en valores, posibilidades y dificultades. Las conclusiones refrendan y amplían los resultados de estudios previos en la materia, destacando muy variadas posibilidades de los álbumes en la etapa de Educación Infantil: el género agrada y satisface a docentes y alumnado, permite la educación emocional y en valores y genera dinámicas de aprendizaje variadas y relevantes.

**Palabras clave:** Álbum ilustrado; literatura infantil y juvenil; valores morales; educación en valores; cuestionarios al profesorado; Educación Infantil.

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## INTRODUCTION

Picture books are artistic-literary works that bring the reader closer to a story narrated with a harmonious dual language: text and images (Martín-Rogero and Villalba-Salvador, 2020; Borda-Crespo, 2024). They have a great educational value, and attract students, families, and educators (Fajardo, 2014; Medina-Quintana and Vara-Medina, 2019; Vouillamoz, 2022). This is due to the importance acquired by the image, the illustration, and the graphical arts in the creation of the story (Salisbury, 2007). Thus, there is a need to know how teachers can utilize them in Early Childhood Education classrooms.

This genre has become an essential way to connect children to literature, as it creates a nexus between the text and the illustrations that stimulates all the senses and allows establishing genuine connections between fiction and the real world (Mena-Bernal, 2016; Strouse et al., 2018). Thus, it can be used by those who have not yet learned to read, becoming a useful and interesting medium in the Early Childhood Education stage (Hoster-Cabo and Gómez-Camacho, 2013). While an adult person reads, the child can follow the narration with the images, with work being simultaneously performed on reading and visual literacy (Borda, 2018; Dowdall et al., 2020).

As of today, picture books have become education materials in Early Childhood Education that allow children to learn, have fun, acquire vocabulary, empathize with the characters, recognize and manage emotions, and express what they think and feel (Dowdall et al., 2020; Mena-Bernal, 2016; Sánchez-Díaz-Marta, 2018; Soler-Quílez, 2016), aside from acquiring civic values (Díaz-Seoane et al., 2022). Educating in values is the objective of Early Childhood Education so that moral behavior is constructed simultaneously with the rest of the subjects that are learned (Dowdall et al., 2020; Guichot-Reina and Merino-Delgado, 2016; López-Mora and Best-Rivero, 2021; Ruiz-Repullo, 2017; Strouse et al., 2018).

The present work aims to specifically review the values of (1) cultural diversity, (2) coexistence, and (3) equality. Given that immigration has increased in education centers, together with bullying and discrimination, it is necessary to work on these values to favor respect and intercultural and equal coexistence (Heinsbergen, 2013; Hortigüela-Alcalá and Hernando-Garijo, 2018; Koss, 2015; Pedrero-García et al., 2017; Rodríguez-García et al., 2019), and to create an environment that leaves negative attitudes and prejudices behind (Navarro-Granados, 2015; Vara-López, 2022).

Hoster-Cabo (2007) created a proposal about the use of picture books to educate in values. The first task performed was to investigate what picture books are appropriate to encourage children to reflect. Picture books were found that were based on respect, kindness, dignity, and even on the construction of personality. Then, sixty-six titles were selected. Hoster-Cabo (2007) suggested that after reading a picture book in the classroom, debates should be started to analyze the different situations that the children may have also experienced that are similar to the story. This allows for the transfer of information between the world of fiction and reality (Strouse et al., 2018).

The study by García and Rodríguez (2014) aimed to discover what values are transmitted by children's picture books, and demonstrated that the complexity and number of values that appeared in the picture books increased along with the age of the children. On the other hand, Encabo-Fernandez et al. (2012) conducted a study on intercultural work through picture books, using six books that came from different cultures and told stories about diversity and respect. Using these books, different in-classroom activities were performed, concluding that picture books are good resources for working on cultural diversity. Nevertheless, although picture books may ignore the treatment of diversity and reinforce hegemonic views of gender, ethnicity, and disability, diversity can be considered in the analysis by the mediating adults to not transmit stereotypes (Heinsbergen, 2013; Koss, 2015).

Other relevant studies include Díaz-Seoane et al. (2021) and Beacon (2021), about the production of picture books that break away from gender roles, to promote equality between men and women, and inclusion. More specifically, in the work by Díaz-Seoane et al. (2021), an analysis was conducted of the picture book *Monstruo Rosa*, which is centered on diversity and equality, and concluded that children can be reached through colors and the components of the illustrations, to work on inclusion and diversity, as

the picture book shows differences as strengths. [Beacon \(2021\)](#) analyzed the picture book *Me and You* by Anthony Browne, from a gender perspective, revealing the importance of working on diversity. It is a new version of the traditional story of *Goldilocks*, which reflects the current gender conflicts, thereby allowing for discussing the situation experienced by the characters of the story. In addition, [Beacon \(2021\)](#) also affirmed that both stories, *Me and You* and *Goldilocks*, can be read in the classroom, to then talk about their differences with the help from questions centered on values, and perform activities about gender roles.

Therefore, picture books are powerful resources to study in Early Childhood Education: they can achieve growth and a relevant symbolic, literary, linguistic, and conceptual transfer in children, at the same time that they help them read and develop values and ethical codes of behavior ([Dowdall et al., 2020](#); [Strouse et al., 2018](#)).

Based on the above, the main aim of the present article is to discover how teachers work with picture books in Early Childhood Education, and to explore how they address education in values. The specific objectives are: (1) to design a semi-structured interview that allow us to gain an in-depth understanding of how a small group of Early Childhood Education teachers work with picture books in their classrooms: how they use them, their aims, their evaluation, and possibilities and difficulties, among others; (2) to discover which picture books they use in Early Childhood Education, and how they use them for educating in values (coexisting, cultural diversity, and equality): relevant titles, activities used, values addressed, etc.

## METHOD

To achieve these objectives, the qualitative research method was chosen. Given that the present article will analyze the classroom practices of teachers with picture books, it is necessary to ask open-ended questions about it. The instrument designed to collect the information was a semi-structured interview, in order to have a prior script, and also to be able to delve into relevant aspects ([Husband, 2020](#); [Ruslin et al., 2022](#)). The instrument contains background questions to discover the teaching experience in Early Childhood Education of the person interviewed, and questions oriented towards the work in the classroom with picture books in order to discover if they use them, which of them are used to work on values, and how this is performed.

An invitation was sent to different public and concerted centers in Cantabria (Spain) to ask for their collaboration in this study, which resulted in the collaboration of 22 people, a varied collection of teachers. [Table 1](#) shows what grades were taught/tutored by each participant throughout their professional career, the age range, sex, type of center where they taught, and the code used to identify each participant.

**Table 1**

*Characterization of the participants*

Grades tutored	Age	Sex	Type of center	Identification code
2, 3, 4 and 5 years old	Between 41 and 50	Female	Public	FemTeacher1,41-50P
0, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 years old	Older than 50	Female	Public and Concerted	FemTeacher2,+50PandC
3, 4 and 5 years old	Older than 50	Female	Public	FemTeacher3,+50P
2, 3, 4 and 5 years old	Between 31 and 40	Female	Public	FemTeacher4,31-40P
2, 3, 4 and 5 years old	Between 41 and 50	Female	Public and Concerted	FemTeacher5,41-50PandC
3, 4 and 5 years old	Older than 50	Female	Public	FemTeacher6,+50P
3, 4 and 5 years old	Between 41 and 50	Female	Public	FemTeacher7,41-50P

Grades tutored	Age	Sex	Type of center	Identification code
2, 3, 4 and 5 years old and 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> of primary school	Between 41 and 50	Male	Public	MaleTeacher8,41-50P
3, 4 and 5 years old	Between 31 and 40	Male	Concerted	MaleTeacher9,31-40C
3, 4 and 5 years old	Between 31 and 40	Male	Public	MaleTeacher10,31-40P
1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 years old	Between 41 and 50	Female	Public	FemTeacher11,41-50P
1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 years old	Older than 50	Female	Public	FemTeacher12,+50P
3, 4 and 5 years old	Between 41 and 50	Male	Public	MaleTeacher13,41-50P
3, 4 and 5 years old	Between 41 and 50	Female	Concerted	FemTeacher14,41-50C
3, 4 and 5 years old	Between 41 and 50	Female	Concerted	FemTeacher15,41-50C
2, 3, 4 and 5 years old	Between 31 and 40	Female	Public	FemTeacher16,31-40P
3, 4 and 5 years old	Between 41 and 50	Female	Concerted	FemTeacher17,41-50C
3, 4 and 5 years old	Older than 50	Female	Concerted	FemTeacher18,+50C
3 and 4 years old	Younger than 30	Female	Concerted	FemTeacher19,-30C
3, 4 and 5 years old	Younger than 30	Female	Concerted	FemTeacher20,-30C
3, 4 and 5 years old	Between 41 and 50	Male	Concerted	MaleTeacher21,41-50C
3, 4 and 5 years old	Older than 50	Female	Concerted	FemTeacher22,+50C

To have access to the sample, the teachers from the different centers were met in person, to provide them with an explanation of the aims of the work, and they provided contact information for other teachers (snowball sampling). A variety of people was always sought, with respect to sex, age, and type of center.

The categories of the object of analysis of the study were the following:

1. Use of picture books
2. Format of the picture books
3. Aims of the use of picture books
4. Satisfaction of the students and teachers
5. Ways to read the picture book in the classroom
6. Education in values through the picture book
7. Relevant picture books to work on values
8. Values addressed by the picture books
9. Activities performed before, during, and after reading the picture book
10. Notable picture books to work on the values of cultural diversity, coexisting, and equality
11. Activities performed after the reading of the picture book to put emphasize the values
12. Possibilities found when using the picture books with the students
13. Difficulties found when using the picture books with the students

To inquire about them, the following interview script was designed, with 13 questions about the 13 analysis categories:

**Table 2***Interview questions*

<b>Background questions. To learn about the interviewee's experience in early childhood education.</b>	
1. 1. What grades have you taught throughout your teaching experience?	All of them / Only one: which one? / Many: indicate which ones
2. Age	Younger than 30 / Between 31 and 40 / Between 41 and 50 / Older than 50
3. Sex	Male / Female
4. Type of center	Public / Private/Concerted
<b>Questions about working with picture books in the classroom. To find out if they use them, which ones they use to teach values, and how they do it.</b>	
1. Do you regularly use picture books in the classroom?	
2. In paper or digital format?	
3. What is the aim or aims of using picture books?	
4. Do you like them? Do the children?	
5. How do you read the picture books to the pupils?	
6. Do you work on values with the Early Childhood Education pupils through the use of picture books?	
7. Could you highlight some picture books that you think are good for working on values?	
8. What values do each of these picture books address/ do you work on with each of these picture books?	
9. What activities do you perform before, during, and after reading each picture book?	
10. What picture books do you underline as relevant for working on the values of cultural diversity, coexistence, and equality?	
11. What other activities related with the picture book do you perform after the reading?	
12. What possibilities do you find when using picture books with the children?	
13. What difficulties do you find after using picture books with the children?	

To begin with the data collection, an informed consent form was created, which indicated the aim of the work and the data protection policy, and the participants signed it to show their agreement. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and all the information was organized and treated in an Excel file.

To analyze the data, the Excel matrix was divided into categories and variables. For this, the information was distributed into: background variables, which are the grades tutored by the interviewee, age, sex, type of center, and identification code, and the categories of the study on the picture books in Early Childhood Education.

To address the results section, which is organized around these categories, a content analysis was performed of the answers provided by the collaborators to the different questions (Ruslin et al., 2022). The testimonies were first grouped according to subjects and then given their affinity (common responses and discrepancies), and the specificities that some of them noted were also taken into account. In addition, some testimonies were selected, by choosing key and original answers of the participants to show how they saw the subjects addressed, and presented in the results section.

To ensure that the study was conducted with the maximum guarantees, the present work passed the evaluation proposed by the University Ethics Committee, and the anonymity and confidentiality of the collaborators were maintained, alluding at all times to the testimonies of the interviewees through pseudonyms (Husband, 2020). For each of the participants, an identification code was created, which shows

the sex, age, and type of center. Example: FemTeacher1,41-50P (Female teacher 1, 41-50 age range, public school).

## RESULTS

This section presents a descriptive summary of the answers obtained in the interviews. It is organized around the categories described in the methods section, and provides the testimonies of the participants that illustrate the most notable results. There are 11 categories, with two variables grouped into two categories (there were 13 previously):

- a) Use and format of picture books in the classroom (two variables: use and format)
- b) Aims of the use of picture books in the classrooms
- c) Satisfaction of the students and teachers with the picture books
- d) Ways to read the picture book with the students
- e) Education in values through picture books
- f) Notable picture books to work on values and values they address
- g) Activities performed before, during, and after reading the picture book
- h) Notable picture books to work on the values of cultural diversity, coexisting, and equality (two variables: picture books used and values addressed)
- i) Activities performed after the reading of the picture book work on the values
- j) Possibilities found when using picture books with the children
- k) Difficulties found when using the picture books with the students

### *a) Use and format of picture books in the classroom*

All the individuals interviewed affirmed using picture books in their classrooms. They noted the importance of using this genre with their students. As one female collaborator stated:

“I read one picture book every day, and sometimes even two or three. If they ask me to read a story, or they come with one and want me to read it to them, I stop what we are doing and always read it, because I love them. I always have the story books available in some corner of my classroom, and they freely get them and enjoy them, and I read them whenever they want” (FemTeacher5,41-50PandC).

As for the format, almost all of them mentioned using both paper and digital formats, although they prioritize paper. As one female collaborator says:

Generally in paper format, but it is true that sometimes we want to work on some emotion or some type of diversity or whatever, and we don't have it, and then we resort to the digital format (FemTeacher19,-30C).

However, some collaborators reject the digital format.

I always read the physical book, I don't like the digital ones. Always the physical book, that they can touch, that they can envision (FemTeacher5,41-50PandC).



### ***b) Aims of the use of picture books in classrooms***

Most of the individuals interviewed mentioned that they used picture books to address some type of content, whether a value (such as friendship or equality), the start of a project, reading and writing, or graphomotor skills. That is, the use picture books as support that precedes a lesson, giving them an educational focus.

Especially to transmit values and to address the management of emotions, to deal with topics that emerged in the classroom, and some of them are used to work on the content of a given project (FemTeacher15,41-50C).

In addition, they state that when a situation of conflict has been experienced in the classroom, the picture book is a very useful resource to address it or to manage the emotions derived from it.

However, two of the participants manifested using the picture book mainly for enjoyment, “mainly so that the children become interested in reading, that they like the topic of reading” (MaleTeacher21,41-50C). They especially underlined the importance of the children understanding reading time as a moment of pleasure.

### ***c) Satisfaction of the students and teachers with the picture books***

All the participants demonstrated their love for picture books. “Yes, yes, I like them a lot. In fact, my house is filled with picture books” (MaleTeacher13,41-50P). Even more so, all the collaborators affirmed that students love this genre. All of them coincided that picture books are successful and awaken their interest. In addition, one of the participants stated that “it is very satisfying to see their faces when you are telling the story. It gives you feedback” (FemTeacher6,+50P).

On the other hand, some collaborators stated that the fact that the children liked the picture book or not was dependent on them, how they tell the story, and how they transmit it. “It is important for you to like them for them to like them” (MaleTeacher10,31-40P).

### ***d) Ways to read the picture book in the classroom***

The picture books can be read in many different ways. Most of the participants affirmed reading it in the morning assembly, all together and in front of the children. The teacher shows the cover so that the children imagine what the content of the story could be, and reads it while continuously showing the images; “we generally sit during the morning assembly, and I turn the book so that everyone can see it while I tell the story” (FemTeacher16,31-40P) while also making gestures “I get myself down to their level, I’m very theatrical, I act silly and change the intonation and the voices, and that’s very attractive to them” (FemTeacher12,+50P). The teachers show the pictures while they tell the story, pointing to the text with their fingers, so that they “establish the connection between the written code and what I’m saying” (FemTeacher6,+50P).

But, with respect to the ways of reading the book, we also find singular practices: for example, some have a ritual: they light a candle, ring a bell, or sing a song that tells the children how they must behave during the story. A collaborator says “to tell them the story at story time, during my schedule, I perform a story ritual” (FemTeacher5,41-50PandC).

In addition, on some occasions, when the students already know the story, the teachers invite them to tell it, not reading the literal text, but adapting it as a function of the students. In this way “sometimes when there are some early readers, especially in the five years-old class, where some of the can already read, they can each read a page” (FemTeacher3,+50P).

On the other hand, some teachers prefer to know the story and to have the book ready to tell it to the students “I try to have the story prepared beforehand, and tell it to them instead of reading it”



(FemTeacher7,41-50P), but others want to be surprised by the story “a thing I do with the book is that I never read it beforehand. I discover the book at the same time as the children” (FemTeacher6,+50P).

Lastly, one male interviewer expressed that picture books unite the person who tells it and the child, and the reading time is intimate and creates an emotional bond.

So, what I have at school is a moment of closeness, in which the child finds a strong emotional closeness with me through the story (MaleTeacher8,41-50P).

### *e) Education in values through picture books*

Most of the individuals interviewed used picture books with the aim of educating in values. “It is much easier to bring them close a value through a story that they are attracted to, they feel as part of the story” (FemTeacher18,+50C).

However, two participants indicate that they do not use the picture books for this. They are aware that they have many implicit values and that the reading transmits them, but they do not read it with that objective.

All the picture books obviously have some underlying value, it is a reality, but the picture books are rarely used at the service of values, not many times (MaleTeacher13,41-50P).

### *f) Notable picture books to work on values and values they address*

All the participants highlighted a great variety of titles they use. Tables 3 to 6 show the picture books organized by the topics indicated by the collaborators.

**Table 3**

*Picture books about friendship, respect, self-esteem, courage, perseverance, conflict resolution, compassion, and empathy*

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
<i>Nos tratamos bien</i>	Lucía Serrano	Beascoa
<i>The rainbow fish</i>	Marcus Pfister	NorthSouth
<i>Butterfly ears</i>	Luisa Aguilar	HarperCollins
<i>The little white rabbit</i>	Xosé Ballesteros	HarperCollins
<i>The lamb who came for dinner</i>	Steve Smallman	HarperCollins
<i>Camilla the zebra</i>	Marisa Núñez	Kalandraka
<i>Los tres bandidos</i>	Tomi Ungerer	Kalandraka
<i>The crocodile who came for dinner</i>	Steve Smallman	Little tiger
<i>Blue monster</i>	Olga de Dios Ruiz	HarperCollins
<i>The story of the little mole who knew it was none of his business</i>	Werner Holzwarth	HarperCollins
<i>Tu cuerpo es tuyo</i>	Lucía Serrano	NubeOcho
<i>La joya interior</i>	Anna Llenas	Lumen

**Table 4***Picture books about emotions*

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
<i>The colour monster</i>	Anna Llenas	Templar Books
<i>Emotionary: Say what you feel</i>	Cristina Núñez y Rafael R. Valcárcel	HarperCollins
<i>How are you peeling? foods with moods</i>	Saxton Freymann	Turtleback
<i>Alitas de pollo y el calendario de las emociones</i>	Juan José Izquierdo Prieto	Instituto Calasanz de las Ciencias de la Educación
<i>Sometimes mom has thunder in her head</i>	Beatriz Taboada	Bromera
<i>In my heart</i>	Jo Witek	Abrams Books

**Table 5***Picture books about equality and diversity*

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
<i>Azules y rosas, ya ves tú que cosas</i>	Belén Gaudes y Pablo Macías	Cuatro tuercas
<i>I love my colorful nails</i>	Alicia Acosta y Luis Amavisca	HarperCollins
<i>Modernita se pregunta: ¿Qué es lo normal?</i>	Moderna de pueblo	Zenith
<i>¡Hombre de color!</i>	Jérôme Ruillier	Juventud
<i>The black book of colors</i>	Menena Cottin	WordUnited

**Table 6***Picture books about teamwork*

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
<i>A taste of the moon</i>	Michael Grejniec	HarperCollins
<i>La suma de todos juntos</i>	Borja Gómez	Babidi-bú
<i>Moon is sad</i>	Guido Van Genechten	Independent Pub Group

On this respect, a collaborator insisted on the importance of how it is told.

The respect the teacher shows when telling a story and how it is told gives greater meaning to the work of values education than to the actual content of the album. The greatest impact of all this work depends on the person telling the story. (MaleTeacher8,41-50P).

### ***g) Activities performed before, during, and after reading the picture book***

Before reading the book, many of the interviewees affirm inviting the students to describe the cover, talk about the title, about the authors, to make a hypothesis about what the story is about. “Normally, we show them the cover so that they see the image and say what the story is about” (FemTeacher20,-30C), and then they sing the start of the story song, which varies depending on the taste of the participant.

During the reading, the interviewees exert the reading model, exemplify and dramatizing the scenes, and are careful with the intonation “during (the reading), I’m careful with the intonation, the pauses” (FemTeacher11,41-50P).

After the reading, the participants generally talk with the children and make comments about the story. Thus, they verify if the hypotheses are confirmed, make comments about what happened in the story, make questions about the degree of comprehension, work on written expression through the title, make a new cover, re-write the story with another ending, etc.

Sometimes we work on the title, or maybe we want to work on written expression, or with the cover, by drawing an alternative, or with the older children, we even re-write the story and look for another ending, or we change the story (FemTeacher3,+50P).

When the students produce a manual creation, they show values, because it includes the characteristics of the characters, or the actions captured by the story “to highlight the positive or negative behaviors of some character” (FemTeacher11,41-50P).

### ***h) Notable picture books to work on the values of cultural diversity, coexisting, and equality***

The collaborators underlined a series of titles of specific and relevant picture books to work on cultural diversity, equality, and coexisting, as these values were prioritized in the present study.

**Table 7**

*Picture books on cultural diversity*

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
<i>Modernita se pregunta: ¿Qué es lo normal?</i>	Moderna de pueblo	Zenith
<i>Pink monster</i>	Olga de Dios	HarperCollins
<i>El cazo de Lorenzo</i>	Isabelle Carrier	Juventud
<i>Elmer</i>	David McKee	Thienemann
<i>Un bicho extraño</i>	Mon Daporta	Kalandraka
<i>Por cuatro esquinitas de nada</i>	Jérôme Ruillier	Juventud
<i>Butterfly ears</i>	Luisa Aguilar	HarperCollins
<i>Los diferentesos</i>	Margarita Blanco y Daniel Morillas	Círculo Rojo
<i>¡Hombre de color!</i>	Jérôme Ruillier	Juventud
<i>A paso de tortuga</i>	Bonifacio Ofogo y Rebeca Luciani	Kalandraka
<i>Little blue and little yellow</i>	Leo Lionni	WordUnited
<i>Color carne</i>	Desirée Bela-Lobedde	Penguin Kids
<i>The cow that laid an egg</i>	Andy Cutbill	HarperCollins
<i>Cirilo, el cocodrilo</i>	Almudena Taboada	SM

Title	Author	Publisher
<i>La reina trotamundos</i>	Montse Ganges	Combel

**Table 8***Picture books on equality*

Title	Author	Publisher
<i>El niño que no quería ser azul y la niña que no quería ser rosa</i>	Patricia Fitti	Destino
<i>Azules y rosas, ya ves tú que cosas</i>	Belén Gaudes y Pablo Macías	Cuatro Tuercas
<i>I love my colorful nails</i>	Alicia Acosta y Luis Amavisca	HarperCollins
<i>Princesses fart too</i>	Ilan Brenman	Bromera
<i>Pink monster</i>	Olga de Dios	HarperCollins
<i>Candy Pink</i>	Adela Turín	HarperCollins
<i>Giraffes can't dance</i>	Giles Andreae	Orchard Books
<i>Arthur and Clementine</i>	Adela Turín	Writers and Readers Ltd
<i>Yo voy conmigo</i>	Raquel Díaz Reguera	Thule
<i>La peluca de Luca</i>	Helena Berenguer	La Naturadora
<i>Daniela the pirate</i>	Susanna Isern	NubeOcho
<i>Perro azul</i>	Nadja	Corimbo

**Table 9***Picture books on coexisting*

Title	Author	Publisher
<i>Nos tratamos bien</i>	Lucía Serrano	Beascoa
<i>A taste of the moon</i>	Michael Grejniec	HarperCollins
<i>The rainbow fish</i>	Marcus Pfister	NorthSouth
<i>The three billy goats</i>	Olalla González	HarperCollins
<i>Un monstruo muy especial</i>	Ángela McAllister	Elfos
<i>Swimmy</i>	Leo Lionni	Dragonfly Books
<i>Good little wolf</i>	Nadia Shireen	Alfred a Knopf
<i>Coco y Pío</i>	Alexis Deacon	Ekaré

There was one collaborator who at the start, did not know what to answer, and stated:

I don't know what to tell at this very moment, but I know what I look for: working always on the traditional stereotypes, I to reject it or at least I offer an alternative (MaleTeacher8,41-50P).

Another teacher highlights:

I always stress diversity, so that they value, appreciate, and enjoy it. We are very diverse, and this is good, we have to know how to understand each other and know how to coexist with very different people (FemTeacher7,41-50P).

### ***i) Activities performed after the reading of the picture book work on the values***

Almost all the interviewees affirmed working on values, in one way or another, after the reading of the picture book. They underlined: the importance of oral expression to see who understood it, making drawings, the dramatization of the scenes from the story, the association of the fictitious story with reality, the search of situations experienced related with the story, etc.

We have to try, every day, when conflict arise, to tell them: do you remember about the day we read the story? Do you remember what happened? What did we have to do? It's like we are always re-living it. It's not only about reading it and doing an activity (FemTeacher1,41-50P).

A female collaborator insists that it is fundamental to talk in the classroom about how it feels when one experiences what it occurs in the picture book and to look for solutions, as well as to ask them to make a drawing that shows their mood to learn how to identify emotions.

If there is a situation of anger in the story, for example, after reading a story, we talk about how everyone feels when they are angry, what we can do to correct it, and they make a drawing alluding to mood. For example, if it was a situation of anger, they are asked to draw something that calms them (FemTeacher2,+50PandC).

The words from a collaborator must be underlined, who mentioned not doing specific activities after reading the story:

If it comes from them, then yes, but on my part, I close the book and the story ends, that's it. In addition, as it is something that they like to listen to over and over, we'll use the story again (MaleTeacher13,41-50P).

### ***j) Possibilities found when using picture books with the children***

All the participants affirmed finding infinite possibilities. They explained that they work on many aspects, from the reading of pictograms, the support of a project, motivation for reading and writing, or the stimulation for the creation of their own stories, to the identification of emotions, the transmission of values, enjoying children's literature, or fostering creativity. As one female interviewee says: "I think that it has many possibilities, because it offers a considerable scope in every area of the curriculum" (FemTeacher3,+50P).

At the same time, the collaborators coincided in that it is an essential instrument in the Early Childhood Education stage, ensuring that it is a versatile material that must be used daily. "It should be a systematic resource and of daily use for everything, as there is always a story for everything" (FemTeacher6,+50P).

A female teacher highlighted that it is a resource for "returning to calmness" when the class becomes rowdy, which works if the reading of the story occurs in a calm environment, and the teacher also points out that the possibilities of a picture book also depends on the manner in which it is used by the person. "There are as many versions as voices, as many possibilities as the ability of the person who is with children" (MaleTeacher8,41-50P).

### *k) Difficulties found when using the picture books with the students*

Most of the people interviewed did not find difficulties when using picture books, “on the contrary, a book always offers many possibilities” (MaleTeacher10,31-40P). In turn, there were some participants who mentioned some, but they explained that these are implicit difficulties that appear during the reading, due to different circumstances.

You can find difficulties when the group is large. During the reading, you obviously have to continuously get their attention so that they do not leave the reading (FemTeacher1,41-50P);

The main difficulty is the different levels. There are children whose attention can be easily captured, but others who due to SEN (Special Education Needs), cannot stay quiet for so long (FemTeacher14,41-50C).

Lastly, two collaborators mentioned finding difficulties related with themselves, explaining that depending if they liked the book or not, they will know how to work with it and to transmit the content in a different manner. “I can find some difficulties if the story is imposed, and because I don’t like it, I will not transmit it well” (FemTeacher7,41-50P).

## CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The present study, conducted through semi-structured interviews given to Early Childhood Education teachers, allows us to draw conclusions and discuss some previous studies. We can underline, in first place, the great educational value given to picture books as a genre, by Early Childhood Education teachers (Fajardo, 2014; Martín-Rogero and Villalba-Salvador, 2020; Medina-Quintana and Vara-López, 2019; Vouillamoz, 2022). The teachers habitually use them and advocate for their use, as they help students learn to read, and enable the simultaneous development of reading and visual literacy, creating connections between fiction and the real world, coinciding with the results from previous studies (Borda, 2018; Hoster-Cabo and Gómez-Camacho, 2013; Mena-Bernal, 2016; Strouse et al., 2018; Medina-Quintana and Vara-López, 2019; Vouillamoz, 2022). In future studies, it would be interesting to perform observations in the classrooms on the different uses of picture books, in both paper (widely use) and digital (not as widely use) formats.

Likewise, the teachers verify that picture books are an important resource to recognize and manage emotions, express feelings and emotions, and to acquire civic values in Early Childhood Education, in agreement with previous studies (Díaz-Seoane et al., 2022; Dowdall et al., 2020; Mena-Bernal, 2016; Sánchez-Díaz-Marta, 2018; Soler-Quílez, 2016). Thus, picture books fulfill a dual objective: they educate in values while simultaneously developing multiple important school lessons (Guichot-Reina and Merino Delgado, 2016; López-Mora and Best-Rivero, 2021; Ruiz-Repullo, 2017). On the other hand, the diversity of titles used by the teachers every day indicates that picture books address values that favor respect and intercultural and equal coexistence, and create school contexts free of negative attitudes and prejudices (Hortigüela-Alcalá and Hernando-Garijo, 2018; Navarro-Granados, 2015; Pedrero-García et al., 2017; Rodríguez-García et al., 2019; Vara-López, 2022). The interviewees revealed that picture books allow them to address matters related with diversity, coexistence, and equality. However, it is necessary to further delve, in future studies, into how this education in values takes place. It is necessary to inquire about hegemonic values and the stereotypes that can be taught with respect to equality, ethnicity, plurality, disability, etc. in Early Childhood Education classrooms, and the positive or negative impact of the picture books in this process (Heinsbergen, 2013; Koss, 2015). Therefore, it would be important to conduct ethnographic studies in the classrooms when working with picture books to identify the hegemonic values and the possible stereotypes transmitted daily in the classrooms of Early Childhood Education. The question must be asked whether or not the students who work with picture books have a broader view of human diversity, civic coexistence, and equality among people. Likewise, in the future, it would be necessary to perform specific studies on education in each of these values, and even other values and/or counter-values, using picture books.



Likewise, the teachers verified that picture books offer many methodological possibilities in classrooms. They underline the relevance of creating discussion groups after reading to comment on similar stories and situations experienced (Hoster-Cabo, 2007). On the other hand, it was verified that teachers see much potential in the picture books, which show numerous and complex values that are important in the Early Childhood Education stage (Beacon, 2021; Díaz-Seoane et al., 2021; Encabo-Fernández et al., 2012; García and Rodríguez, 2014). The present study has allowed for the identification of a corpus of readings that can help any teacher, either experienced or novel, to approach picture books for their use in Early Childhood Education classrooms. Given the breadth of the featured titles, each teacher can articulate specific didactic proposals of education in values with some or all of these titles (Dowdall et al., 2020; Heinsbergen, 2013; Koss, 2015; Strouse et al.). It would be interesting to also collect the point of view of the students with respect to the reading of picture books in the classrooms, and how they act upon their lives, comparing the values that are taught and those that become established.

In the future, it would be desirable to replicate this exploratory study in different national or international contexts with a larger number of teachers and the application of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Likewise, specific studies could be conducted on some of the highlighted topics (digital reading of picture books, the specific transmission of values such as diversity or equality). It would be desirable to perform ethnographic studies, with the coexistence of teachers, researchers, and students in the classroom, especially listening to the voice of the students, and observing/analyzing their behaviors/values in the classroom and outside of it.

In any case, the article allows us to affirm that picture books are versatile, relevant, necessary, and current resources, as well as valid, to address values such as coexistence, diversity, and equality in Early Childhood Education, as revealed by the words of the teachers interviewed.

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE AUTHORS

**Raquel Gutiérrez-García:** Formal analysis; Conceptualization; Data curation; Writing - original draft; Writing - review and editing; Research; Methodology; Resources; Software; Validation; Visualization.

**Carmen Álvarez-Álvarez:** Project administration; Formal analysis; Conceptualization; Writing - review and editing; Methodology; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization.

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