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Incorporating illustrations in Teaching

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Abstract

Human brains retain everything visually, especially in kids this power is much amplified. Their brains can be nurtured through use of pictorial depictions of everyday events, stories and history lessons for a better and a more lasting learning experience. Illustrated novels, graphical biographies, series of comic books etc. are some of the best sources that can be given to children during their early years. Illustrations are also a good way to inspire imagination and to give children an opportunity to give words to their visuals

A picture is worth a thousand words. Read on to know how using illustrations and visual aids can be a great stepping stone to giving children a great academic boost.

Apple, Orange, Clouds, Waterfall, Sand, Sun, Moon, Stars--- these words just sound random, don't they? But if you think about the time when you were reading them, you will realize that you were also visualizing them in your head!

Our brain believes it or not but retains and associates everything visually, even words. All that we read, passes through the optical nerves of our eyes, and goes straight to the core vortex of our minds where both the left and the right sides of the brains make sense of whatever is in front of our eyes, by visually and associating it with a shape, or an image. This, however, happens so fast, that not even the combined strength of all the computer hardware in the world, can match the processing speed of our brain. This intriguing concept has recently caught the attention of experts. They recommend various methods of what they call *'mind training',* which includes use of visual aids, like pictures and illustrations, for a range of therapeutic and educational needs.

In children especially, the power of the brain is amplified as compared to adults. This is because their brains are fairly 'empty', because they are yet to see or experience many things. Experts and

educationists believe that this power can be nurtured through the use of illustrated depictions of everyday events, stories and history lessons for a better and a more lasting learning experience. That's why illustrated novels, graphical biographies, series of comic books etc. are some of the best sources that can be given to children during their formative years. Illustrations are also a good way to inspire imagination and give children the creativity to connect words with visuals and vice-versa.

Recognizing fairly unexplored and new medium to teaching, experts strongly suggest that visuals of various kinds like paintings, photos, diagrams, illustrations, etc. are vital part of any good teaching curriculum, and essential tool to enhance the visual perception of children. It has been very well put by R. Lloyd Ryan, Assistant Superintendent, Notre Dame Integrated School Board, in an article that *"Without the "critical looking" and "educated seeing" that children develop when visuals are used to support their education, then children's' creative art production capabilities can be significantly impaired."*

Visuals inspire imagination, and that imagination inspires words. Penning a thought of looking at a waterfall, and its majestic beauty will far surpass just writing about a waterfall, on a school desk, without evening knowing what it looks like! In other words, visual aids, especially illustrations, can be a great facilitator to production of thousands of words and a plethora of creative and reasoned thoughts.

Using pictures appropriately can not only help teaching, but also help children in gaining much more from reading, as compared to completing pages upon pages of reading assignments. For example, we have 5 visuals: 1st of some apples; 2nd of the apples in a basket; 3rd of a person standing with the basket of apples in a queue of a shopping mall; 4th the person is paying for the apples; and 5th of the person eating one of the apples; When children arrange these pictures in a series, they will understand a lot more about apples, than just reading a bookish chapter about it; The look and feel of the apple, the ambience of the grocery store, etc. will help children in cultivating a far better & in depth insight of the world around us.

However, for all you teachers and education experts, it does not necessarily mean that you need to be artists. The key here is to learn how to collect the right pictures, whenever and wherever they can be found, regardless of whether they fit an immediately perceived need. Travel magazines, greeting cards, comic books and if nothing works, Google, are some sources that you can explore. The world around us is full of illustrations and depictions that can be used to educate children in a very in-depth manner. Some of the most obvious choices include magazines, calendars, greeting cards, advertising journals, etc. However, we need to keep our eyes open to opportunity and be a bit audacious and give children some vibrant designs and visuals to see once in a while. Make a collage to tell a story or even enlist children in picture collecting.

So go on teachers, get out there. There just as much excitement in scouring for that perfect picture as there is for your children in looking at them in amazement. After all, it is your goal to have your kinds remembers your teachings just as much as they remember you.

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