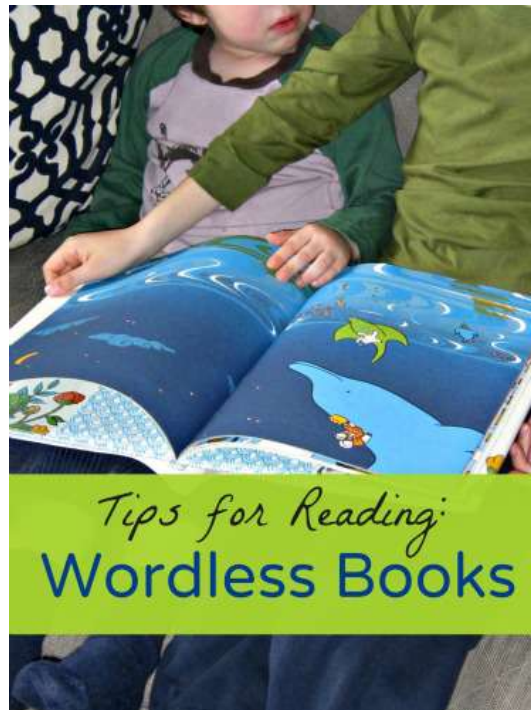


From: <http://www.whatdowedoallday.com/>

## HOW TO “READ” WORDLESS PICTURE BOOKS {PARENT TIPS}

After my list of [15 Wordless Picture Books](#), some parents said they felt lost and didn't know how to read wordless books with kids. Others commented that their kids didn't like books without text. I admit that it took me some time before I learned to enjoy reading wordless books and it wasn't until I felt comfortable with the format that my kids started to enjoy them, too. **I thought it would be fun to share my tips for “reading” these books and how I learned to love wordless books.**



There are lots of benefits to reading wordless books! Literacy is not simply about decoding words, but also involves understanding subtext and the ability to make inferences, so learning how to “read” stories beyond literal text is very important. **Wordless book have to tell the story without text, so they are the perfect tool for enhancing reading comprehension.**

There are three ways I usually “read” wordless books:

### NARRATE THE ACTION:

**The first and maybe the most common approach is to simply narrate the illustrations.** That's how I started. The downside to this reading tactic is that it takes a lot of brain power. Honestly, I don't always have this brain power. It's all very well to say that parents need to be stellar read-aloud aficionados, and that may be true if you read to your kids only at bedtime or what-have-you, but let's face it: parenting is hard and **I am certainly not going to judge you for being tired sometimes.** Reading text is definitely easier than coming up with the words yourself.

### ASK QUESTIONS:

When I got exhausted from doing all the storytelling work myself I started asking questions, and *Whoa!* my kids had a lot to say. Asking questions not only takes pressure off you — the

parent — to do all the thinking (*do you ever feel like you have to do all the thinking? Yeah, me too.*), but **it teaches your children that narrative clues lay outside of text.**

**When answering your questions, kids start to understand story elements like plot, character, conflict, theme and even symbolism.** It lays a terrific foundation for down the road, when they are learning to write and create their own stories in school (or at home).

**General questions are a good way to get started.** There's nothing wrong with simplicity!

- What do you see in the picture?
- What is happening?
- Who is here?

When opening a book for the first time, **ask your child questions about the setting.**

- Where does this story take place?
- What is the weather, season, day?
- Is there anything unusual or familiar about the setting?
- What sorts of things do people do in a place like this?

**Spend time discussing the emotions of the story's characters.** (I like to spend a lot of time asking about the characters and their motivations, probably because of my theatrical background, but also these type of questions help kids understand the role of characters in moving the plot forward.)

- What do you think he/she/it wants?
- Why do you think he/she/it wants it?
- What is the character thinking?
- What is the character feeling? Are they happy? Sad? Angry?

**Be sure to ask anticipatory questions!** Anticipatory questions get kids eager to find out what happens next and keep "reading."

- What will happen next?
- What do you think should happen?
- What is a character going to do next?
- What choices could a character make?

## ENCOURAGE CHILD-LED NARRATION:

Get your child to tell you the story himself! Not only will this take the pressure off you, **child-led narration exercises his imagination, oral skills. It even encourages him to use new vocabulary.** I've noticed with my own sons that they approach narration differently. With my older son, I know he won't tell the story until I've "read" it a few times first and asked him questions. I think he likes to absorb as much information as possible before taking the plunge. It's completely different for my 4 year old who rushes head-first into storytelling with gusto.

So if your child is a little reluctant, give it time, he'll come around and you may be surprised at the things he invents! One of my favorite parts of child-led narration, is that each time my sons "read" a wordless book the story is a little bit different. Occasionally my sons will even narrate the story in the first person. I love how that means they are fully immersed in the action!