



An Introduction to the Whole Book Approach

Presented by Megan Dowd Lambert

Lecturer in Children's Literature, Simmons University

Author of *Reading Picture Books with Children: How to Shake Up Storytime and Get Kids Talking about What They See*

The Whole Book Approach was developed by Megan Dowd Lambert in association with The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, where she worked as an educator for nearly a decade. As you learn about this co-constructive, dialogic approach to reading *with* children, rather than reading *to* children, consider how design and production elements contribute to your own engagement with the picture book as a visual art form.

Key Terms

Layout and Trim Size

- Portrait (vertical)
- Landscape (horizontal)
- Square
- Shaped

Jackets and Covers

- Wrap-around art vs. dual-image jackets
- Display type
- Contrasting case cover art
- Debossed, embossed, foil-stamped, blind-stamped cloth covers

Endpapers

- Single color
- illustrated
- motif
- design

Front Matter and Back Matter

- Frontispiece
- 1/2-title page; title page
- Dedication and copyright pages

Gutters and Page Layout

- Verso (left)
- Recto (right)
- Double-page spread
- Framing
- Page-turners
- Simultaneous succession and panels

Typography

- Typeface vs. font
- Placement
- Knock-out type
- Speech balloons and intraiconic text

Tips for Leading WBA Storytimes



- **Shift** your intent as a storytime leader from thinking about the storytime as performance to thinking about it as discussion.
 - **Create** an environment in which everyone is welcome to speak, and use evidence of children’s non-verbal engagement with the picture book.
 - **Ask** questions inspired by Visual Thinking Strategies (www.vtshome.org) questions and other open-ended questions with embedded design and production terminology to support an inquiry-based engagement with art, design, and text:
 - What do you see happening in this picture?
 - What do you see that makes you say that?
 - What else can we find?
 - Why do you think this book is in a portrait layout and this one is landscape?
 - Can you make a color connection between the jacket art and the endpaper color?
 - Watch how the pictures use the gutter and tell me what you think about these choices.
 - Why do you think this book has such a tiny trim size, and this book is so big?
 - Watch the use of any frames—what happens to them? Why is this important in the story?
 - How do words and pictures work together in this book? What do pictures tell you that words do not?
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- **Paraphrase** and link responses to check for clarity, to demonstrate active listening, and to embed art, design, and literature-related vocabulary into the reading.
 - **Point** to parts of the illustrations and design that children reference in their responses to help keep everyone’s eyes on the book itself.
 - **Use** “1-2-3 page turns” and the phrase “eyes on art” to keep your group working together.
 - **Let** children’s spontaneous questions, responses, and reactions drive your discussion.
 - **Remember**, there’s a big difference between reading a picture book and finishing a picture book. Indulge in all the words, pictures, and design have to offer you.
 - **Keep** things playful, engaging, and fun, but hold space for serious reflection, too, as you allow children to set the tone and pace of the shared reading.
 - **Turn** aberrant readings over to children to puzzle out, in keeping with Vygotsky’s notions of “Zones of Proximal Development” and “More Knowledgeable Others.”
 - **Embrace** the potential for movement into Critical Literacy with the Freireian concept that when we read a text, we read the world.



Megan Dowd Lambert earned her BA at Smith College and her MA in Children’s Literature at Simmons University, where she is now a Lecturer in Children’s

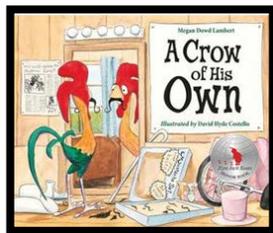
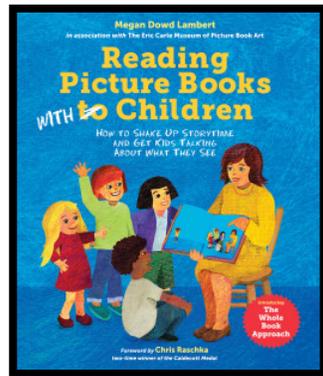
Literature. She is the author of *Reading Picture Books with Children: How to Shake Up Storytime and Get Kids Talking About What They See*

(Charlesbridge 2015), which introduces the **Whole Book Approach**

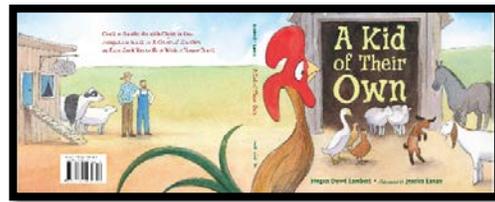
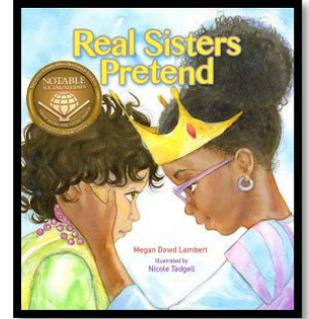
storytime model she developed in association with The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art. In 2009 she was named a Literacy Champion by Mass Literacy, and she served on the 2009 Geisel, 2011 Caldecott, and 2012 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award committees.

Megan won a 2016 Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Honor for her first picture book, *A Crow of His Own*, illustrated by David Hyde Costello (Charlesbridge 2015).

Her second picture book, *Real Sisters Pretend*, illustrated by Nicole Tadgell (Tilbury House 2016) was named a 2017 Notable Social Studies Trade Book, and a Must Read title in the Picture Book/Early Reader category of the 17th Annual

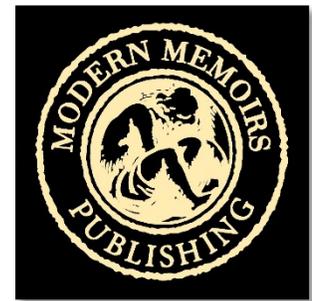


Massachusetts Book Awards. In 2020, Charlesbridge published *A Kid of Their Own* (sequel to *A Crow of His Own*) with illustrations by Jessica Lanan. Her 7-book early reader series about two best friends named **April and Mae** will debut with Charlesbridge in in 2022.



Megan reviews and writes for *Kirkus Reviews* and *The Horn Book* and serves as a consultant for groups such as, Embrace Race: A Community about Race and Kids, MERGE for Equality, and the OurShelves book-box subscription service and advocacy effort.

In 2019 Megan and her husband, Sean St. Marie, an archivist and employee of the Emily Dickinson Museum, became the owners of **Modern Memoirs, Inc.**, a private publishing company founded in 1994 that specializes in: personal and family histories; tribute and celebration books; “grandbooks” for young readers; and personal archives management services. The mother of seven children aged 2-23, Megan lives with her family in western Massachusetts.



Website: www.megandowlambert.com

Twitter: @MDowdLambert

Facebook: @MeganDowdLambert