
*Picturing the World* is an annotated selection of 250 titles of informational, (otherwise known as non-fiction) picture books for children from ages three to 10. Each title has been carefully chosen and evaluated by a veteran children's book reviewer, Kathleen Isaacs. The author has taught and worked in school and public libraries in the US and also in Hong Kong and China. Her experience with children's literature has included chairing selection committees for ALSC’s Sibert Award and ALSC’s Notable Children’s Books, and she twice served as a member of ALSC’s Newbery Award committee. She regularly contributes articles and reviews to professional publications so is well qualified to contribute her knowledge in this area.

The introductory chapter tells us that an informational book is often referred to as non-fiction – that is, books that present factual, verifiable information but can also include poetry and biographies. Traditionally, informational books were (and many still are) presented in a structured, chronological form, with few illustrations. However, Isaacs explains that changes in book production have led to ‘photo essays, in which pictures are the attraction and deliver much of the information while the text may be limited to a few lines and photo captions’.

A picture book is a story told in words and pictures. Each makes an important contribution to the way the story is told and meaning created. According to Libby Gleeson, acclaimed children’ illustrator and author, ‘a picture book is not the same as an illustrated story, there the words alone could tell the story and the illustrations simply break up the words or decorate the text. In the best picture books, the illustrations are absolutely necessary’.

Informational picture books are a blend of the two concepts. They are intended to convey factual and accurate information through a combination of text and pictures. They are rich in colour, illustration, interest and value.

The selections range over a wide variety of topics: World at Home and School, Natural World around Us, World We Make, Things We Do, World of Faith and Festivals, World in History and Our World Today. There is a subject index and an author/illustrator index. There are detailed descriptions for each title, including complete bibliographic information, age-level guidance and notes on book awards. The selection of books was based on clarity of topic, factual accuracy, and a sense of passion and enthusiasm in the writing.

*Picturing the World* is a rich source of the best non-fiction/informational titles to assist librarians and educators in their ongoing search for outstanding informational books that children really want to read.

Cheryl Tinney  
RMIT University