

**Language and Image
in the
Reading-Writing
Classroom:
Teaching Vision**

*edited by
Kristie S. Fleckenstein,
Linda T. Calendrillo
and Demetrice A. Worley*

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TEACHING VISION**

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DEDICATIONS

To the women in my life, who have anchored me as I leaned out to look:
mothers, sisters, daughters, friends.

Kristie S. Fleckenstein

To my father Anthony Calendrillo, who taught me everything I know
about images and gave me the vision to see both inside and out.

Linda T. Calendrillo

For my African-American literature and writing students, who know the
power of images and words.

Demetrice A. Worley

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—*Kristie S. Fleckenstein*

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—*Linda T. Calendrillo*

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—*Demetrice A. Worley*

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Introduction: Teaching Vision: The Importance of Imagery in Reading and Writing

Kristie S. Fleckenstein
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"I don't know what to write next," my 9-year-old complains as she struggles to fashion a story for a Young Authors contest at her elementary school. "Well, why don't you draw your story, then write it," I suggest. "Oh, yeah," she sighs with relief. "I should have done that first."

"You want me to draw? In my reading journal," a first-semester composition student asks me, aghast. "I can't draw. Don't make me draw. It just . . . just fouls up my thinking." His panic is not manufactured. It is full blown and real.

Our elementary schools successfully inculcate in our children the importance of language first and imagery second, if at all. Graphic imagery, mental imagery, and verbal imagery (terms I explore more fully in chap. 1) are merely extras, walk-ons in the educational drama. Because of this training, my fourth grader, an avid drawer, tried to write her story before she drew her illustrations. However, she remained so closely tied to her images that she could greet with relief the suggestion that she use them to jump-start her stalled story. But my first-semester composition student no longer possessed this flexibility. By his 13th year in school, he could only greet with full-fledged terror the suggestion that he draw a reading journal. Although he lived immersed in a highly imagistic culture, he could not comfortably consider the idea of using imagery in his reading-writing activities.

We should not be surprised by his response or his terror. Throughout their schooling, we assess our students' progress on the merits of their lin-

guistic performances, and we teach by analogous linguistic performances. In the reading–writing classroom, discourse is not only the object of study, it is also the medium of study. As our research and textbooks over the past century reflect, reading–writing has typically been conceptualized and taught as an art of language. Thus, it is no wonder that, by high school and college, our students are no longer adept at recognizing the inextricable integration of imagery and language in their learning.

Despite this linguistic orientation in our pedagogy and our theories of meaning, we are gradually coming to a renewed acknowledgment of the importance of imagery in our knowing of and being in the world. Work in cognitive psychology, as well as the interdisciplinary efforts in anthropology, history, and cultural studies, has heightened our awareness of the fusion of image and word in knowledge. We are construing more precisely the ways in which images explicitly and implicitly permeate reading and writing. Such knowledge comes at a crucial juncture in our cultural history. We live in an era in which we are awash by multimodal imagery, inside and out. First, Damasio (1999) connected the continuous stream of mental imagery accompanying our waking and sleeping lives with the development of what he called our core and autobiographical identities. Second, the proliferation of imagery around us—through the hypermedial World Wide Web, computer interfacing, visual media, and virtual reality—highlights the need to attend to the influence of imagery in a networked world. Stroupe (2000) argued that the growing dominance of the multimedia Internet requires of us a multimedia literacy; the hybridization of the “image-word” demands a reconfiguration of what we do as meaning makers and as teachers. Smagorinsky (2000) concurred, claiming that the most significant change literacy teachers will face in the new millennium is the shift dictated by the changes in media. Such shifts in scholarly and cultural perspectives have led the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) to establish a committee on visual literacy and to incorporate into their *Standards for the English Language Arts* (IRA/NCTE, 1996), jointly created by NCTE and IRA (International Reading Association), an emphasis on visual literacy. “We must therefore challenge students to analyze critically the texts they view and to integrate their visual knowledge with their knowledge of other forms of language,” the *Standards* stated (p. 7). Teaching reading and writing needs to include teaching imagery in its myriad forms.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Unfortunately, few books on reading–writing pedagogy offer postsecondary teachers explicit and specific strategies for integrating imagery into their pedagogy. This collection begins to fill that gap, providing

theory-based methods for tapping the strengths of meaning as a fusion of image and word. The chapters in this book offer concrete answers to the question of how we can use imagery to enrich our teaching of reading and writing. These 15 chapters organize themselves according to two guiding principles. First, each addresses in different ways the inextricable integration of imagery and language in meaning. Although the authors focus on imagery, they do not privilege imagery over language. Rather, they emphasize the fusion. Second, each essay focuses on a specific kind of imagery—mental, graphic, and verbal—describing powerful teaching-learning strategies based on the deployment of that kind of imagery in the classroom. Although we organize this collection around three kinds of imagery, we do so cautiously. As the chapters indicate, particular kinds of images overlap and enfold each other, just as image and word are inextricably enfolded. A graphic image is also a mental image, a mental image is realized and shared through verbal imagery, and a verbal image finds fulfillment in both graphic illustration and mental experience. We can divide them linguistically, but not realistically. When we open the door to imagery, we open the door to the entire family of images, each of which offers gifts that add depth to our teaching. As teachers, we are not limited to one kind of imagery or one kind of language, nor need we limit our students to one kind of imagery, one kind of language. The blend of chapters within this book underscores this.

We open with Part I, *Provenance: Authorizing the Image*, an introductory section consisting of two chapters that frame the remaining ones. I (chap. 1) begin by defining imagery as a set of relationships, including within this definition a description of the three kinds of imagery highlighted in the collection. I also explore the ways in which imagery and language enfold, concluding with an examination of three gifts—feeling, forming, and transforming—that imagery carries with it into our classroom. Hobbs (chap. 2) traces the historical connections among imagery, language, and pedagogy, highlighting the complicated transactions among technology, cultural orientation, and the weave of word and image through Western history.

Framed by these introductory chapters, the following 12 chapters offer insight into the ways we can use mental, graphic, and verbal imagery in our classrooms. Part II, *Mental Vision*, focuses on the flash and movement of our interior scenes, which are filled with sights, sounds, textures, smells, and tastes. Pullen Guezzar (chap. 3) extends the reader-response theories of Rosenblatt and Iser by combining them with art psychology to forefront mental imagery in students' writing and reading. She draws on Arnheim's principles of centers and vectors and applies them to students' initial drawings and writings to help students develop their responses to aesthetic texts. Focusing on the interplay of reading and writing, Innocenti

(chap. 4) addresses students' apathetic attitudes toward reading and writing. She advocates engaging students in writing assignments that facilitate a physical relationship with the words on the page. Innocenti offers memory work and sensory vignettes as two ways to link the sensual experience of daily living with the texts students read and write. She demonstrates that this linkage affects students' ability to craft abstract as well as concrete texts. Mylan (chap. 5) explores the possibilities of visualization activities for encouraging students to see themselves as writers and overcome writer's block by assisting them throughout their writing processes. Highlighting somatic and enactive imagery, Worthman (chap. 6) describes an approach to writing that draws from his work with an inner-city teen theater group. Imagery, he argues, helps teenagers address their and others' real-life situations and develop their own writing voices based on their experiences.

If mental imagery permeates our interior lives, then graphic imagery bombards us from the outside. We live in a world and culture that are increasingly dominated by images layered on images. Advertisements in magazines come with visual images, scratch-and-sniff strips, and texture. Information on the Internet is offered in audio as well as textual sound bites. Arcade experiences include virtual rollercoaster rides, car races, and laser tag. Our realities and knowledge are hypermediated. The chapters in Part III, *Graphic Vision*, focus on this array of imagery, offering us ways to use and critique its power in our classrooms. A trained artist as well as a writing teacher, Hobson (chap. 7) argues that all writing that incorporates visual techniques, especially sketching, can benefit visually as well as linguistically oriented students. Hobson provides examples of visual approaches to writing that can serve the interests of all students. Fox (chap. 8) turns to imagery-rich advertising, arguing that advertising, from magazine ads to TV commercials, offers accessible texts for classroom use. Focusing on five high school English as a Second Language (ESL) students, Fox illustrates how students' exploration of media texts motivates them to address complex issues such as power and ideology, nonverbal communication, stereotyping, and emotional appeals. With the guidance of mystic-poet William Blake, Hecimovich (chap. 9) helps his students understand and use the fusion of medium and meaning in Web pages. Hecimovich uses Blake's worldview and artistic mix of the verbal and visual to lead students in his technical writing class to a similar integration in their own learning. Using only materials available in their immediate environments, students create new media and messages as a prelude to creating Web sites that capitalize on the multimedial elements of the computer. Smith (chap. 10) explains that a common problem confronting writing teachers who encourage their students to tap electronic media for information about world events is that students frequently produce discourse that re-

sembles aphoristic or proverbial thinking. The source of that problem can be traced to the visual noise infiltrating electronic media. Using advertisements, Smith provides a description of classroom practices that help students deconstruct images and adapt them into heuristics for socially pertinent discourse.

As each essay illustrates, imagery and word cannot be separated. Word, seemingly so divided from image, is, in fact, soaked in imagery. Image, to be used, must be named. Nowhere is this mutual constitution more evident than in the verbal images we create in our reading and our writing. Therefore, we conclude our collection with Part IV, Verbal Vision. Sheridan-Rabideau (chap. 11) opens this section with a focus on verbal imagery in our natural language, our daily discourse. Sheridan-Rabideau argues that verbal imagery is a necessary ingredient in helping girls and women envision themselves as political and personal agents. Drawing on Goffman, Sheridan-Rabideau suggests ways that classroom assignments and classroom talk can be structured to offer opportunities for the creation of positive verbal images of girls and women. Friend (chap. 12) continues this exploration of verbal imagery in everyday discourse by examining the verbal images that frame conceptualization of teachers; she explores the formative power of that imagery as it guides what can and cannot be done in the classroom. Analyzing the interviews and focus group conversations of students gathered together to discuss teaching and teachers, Friend highlights three dominant images that organize teacher-student interactions, suggesting the necessity of attending to these images as a prelude to improving classroom dynamics. Images written and printed on a page also serve as sites of power in our literate culture. Worley (chap. 13) examines one such site in literature written by African-American women. She explores how students of color and White students use writing and imagery to construct images of themselves as readers, writers, and agents of change. By focusing on their acceptance, rejection, and redefinition of the *other* as presented in contemporary African-American women novelists' texts, Worley argues that teachers can help students transform images of self and other. Her classroom approach relies on an amalgamation of literary metaphor and student illustrations. Concerned with breaking down the artificial distinctions between creative writing and expository writing, Teich (chap. 14) taps the imagistic richness of Wordsworth and Basho, a 17th-century Japanese haiku master. He asks his students to attend to Wordsworth's concept of spots of time, illustrating such spots through both Wordsworth's poetry and Basho's haiku. Students create their own spots of time—their own verbal imagery—to foster greater understanding of the poetry and greater awareness of themselves.

To invite further exploration of imagery and language arts beyond the parameters of these essays, the anthology concludes with Calendrillo's

Afterimage, a bibliographical listing of sources that merit teachers' attention. Pushing beyond the sources cited in the individual references pages, this listing includes books, articles, journals, and websites that explore imagery from myriad angles.

The word grows out of the image, Langer (1942) wrote, and can never be severed from its matrix. We need to integrate imagery and language into our teaching because it is by means of such integration that we create, transform, and live in our world. To teach shorn of imagery is to teach shorn of vision. These 15 chapters offer new ways to see our teaching of reading and writing.

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*PROVENANCE: AUTHORIZING
THE IMAGE*

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Inviting Imagery Into Our Classrooms

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All thinking begins with seeing.

—Langer (1942, p. 224)

We wake up in the morning with the afterimages of dreams fading behind our eyes. We decorate, or shave, the face reflected in the mirror. In the kitchen, as we reach for the milk, we open a refrigerator festooned with snapshots, stick figures, and lopsided rainbows. We rattle the last bit of Cheerios into a bowl and begin preparing a mental grocery list, traveling up and down the aisles of our memory. On the way to work, we stop, turn corners, and park on autopilot, relying on responses to images that seemingly bypass consciousness. We climb the stairs to our building without looking at either feet or risers, depending on a body image that fails us only when we dance. The screensaver on the computer greets us. We shake the mouse awake, double click on the icon for Internet access, and enter cyberspace via a gateway of pictures. Finally, we gather our books, papers, and dry-erase markers; head out the door; enter our class; and begin—to talk. We banish our images to the nether regions and attempt to weave solely out of language a world that we call *language arts*.

A continuous stream of images marks our waking and sleeping lives. Yet, paradoxically, it is language that we use to define our humanity and measure our sophistication. Benchmarks of our development as a species are tied to language. The great leap theory of anthropological evolution ties our mutation into *Homo sapiens* to the development and use of the larynx to create spoken words (Diamond, 1998). The great divide theory of human civilization, introduced by Levi-Strauss (1966) and applied to 20th-century literacy by Ong (1982), asserts that the development of com-

plex thought is tied to the development of written words. Intellectual children—such as philosophy, logic, and politics—are tied to a culture's ability to write. Even individual psychological development is linked to language. Perhaps because of this, articles asserting our various literacy crises have always defined those crises in terms of language: words that Johnny cannot read or write, words that Johnny can decode but cannot comprehend. It is the word, after all, that Vygotsky (1962) identified as the smallest unit of meaning.

The scales of meaning and teaching need to be balanced so that word no longer eclipses image. Language is not the sole, perhaps not even the primary, means by which we create meaning of our worlds. Imagery arises within and around us, marking indelibly the linguistic fabric we weave. We cannot separate our development as a species or as individuals from imagery. As Langer (1942) argued, "Images are . . . our readiest instruments for abstracting concepts from the tumbling stream of actual impressions" (p. 128). Therefore, any theory of humanity's intellectual evolution must include the pictures on the walls of Lascaux Cave in southwestern France. Graphic and mental images serve as precursors to and mutual participants in the cultural development of humankind. Such images "make our primitive abstractions for us," Langer wrote. "[T]hey are our spontaneous embodiment of general ideas" (p. 128). The development of the larynx means nothing if we have nothing to say. Langer (1962) pointed out, "The great step from anthropos, animal to man, was taken when the vocal organs were moved to register the occurrence of an image, and stirred an equivalent occurrence in another brain, and the two creatures referred to the same thing" (p. 50). The great leap was propelled by the kick of imagery. The great divide theory of cultural evolution is similarly marked by imagery. Imagery is the bridge joining orality and literacy. Tannen (1989) long argued that the characteristics of oral language and written language, especially in terms of their joint reliance on imagery, speak more to their similarities than to their differences. Thus, the intellectual sophistication ascribed to the shift into written language is presaged and reflected back to us in our oral traditions where images dominate.

Graphic imagery, verbal imagery, mental imagery—we rely on these images, consciously and unconsciously, in every aspect of our lives, and we can trace their influence in our evolutionary and individual histories. Yet when we enter our classrooms and begin to teach composition, reading, and literature, we rarely reference the rich variety of images infusing our worlds. Instead, we reference language, using language to do so. We turn our backs on imagery. Yet imagery, from the kinesthetic imagery of muscle and bone to the graphic imagery of girders and stick figures, cannot be choked off so easily. Imagery sneaks into our classrooms through

metaphor, simile, and description. It erupts from websites, computer icons, illustrations, body language, and student artwork on chalkboards, desks, and margin doodles. It rips through the illusion that words are all, tying us to the immediacy and materiality of the moment, fusing thought and feeling. Because we cannot separate our words from images without wrenching away meaning and meaningfulness, we need to open the door to imagery. By doing so, we can better understand and teach the difficulties and exhilarations of writing, reading, and literature. By focusing on the play of language and image, we can help our students resonate to, rather than resist, language arts. Such an endeavor does not require that we attend to imagery to the detriment of language. Rather, such an endeavor requires that we nuance our sense of meaning by welcoming into our classrooms the necessary transaction between imagery and language.

The purpose of this chapter and this book is to edge open that classroom door a bit by providing a rationale and flexible framework for integrating imagery into our language arts teaching. As a teacher who actively incorporates imagery in my writing-reading pedagogy, I cannot offer a single, definitive answer to the question, "How should we teach fusing imagery and language?" Instead, I believe there are many answers, as the chapters in this book indicate—answers that individual teachers must evolve, working both top-down from an understanding of imagery and language and bottom-up from the give-and-take of each classroom performance. Rather than offering a definitive answer to the question of how we should teach using imagery, I suggest a starting point—a launching pad for investigation and experimentation. The question I explore in this chapter is as follows: To integrate imagery into our reading-writing pedagogy, what do we need to know about imagery and its potential for enriching our students' language experiences? I answer that question in two parts. First, we need to know what imagery is and how it enfolds language. Therefore, I open with a description of three kinds of images—mental, graphic, and verbal—following that with a working definition of imagery. I conclude this first section with an explanation of the reciprocal movement of imagery and language in meaning. Second, we need to know what gifts imagery brings into our classrooms. I respond to this by exploring three ways that imagery can enrich our teaching. I conclude with a vision of multimodal teaching.

DEFINING VISION: THE FACETS OF IMAGERY

Isadora Duncan supposedly said that if she could say what she meant, she would not have to dance it. Dancing was her response to the recalcitrance of language. Defining imagery offers us a similar conundrum: To explain

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