

## You Can... Find out about illustrators

*For reluctant readers in particular, the illustrator controls access to a text. The child's first impression of the text will be through its illustrations. More often than not, we know the name of a book's author, but the name of the illustrator is often less well known. Help your children to appreciate the role of the illustrator.*

### Thinking points

- Do you encourage children to draw as part of the writing process? For some writers, the story begins in pictures, either those that they actually draw or those that they envision as a film strip. Perhaps enabling children to recognise the close links between words and pictures might help some of the reluctant readers and writers to engage.
- Book illustration is a fine art. There are an increasing number of picture books written for older children – use them to demonstrate to children how the pictures can tell a story which adds to that of the author. A good illustrator does more than simply reflect the story: they can add a richness all of their own.

### Tips, ideas and activities

- Select a number of picture books aimed at older children and illustrated by different illustrators. Ask the class to create their expectations of the book based only on the pictures. Talk about how the illustrator creates an expectation.
- Compare illustrations of characters on covers of books: how does the way the illustrator portrays the characters affect the reader? Do the same for settings.
- Give groups of children a few books which share the same illustrator. They could then explore how a theme is developed by the illustrator. Alternatively, give them a selection of books from different illustrators so they can establish the themes that a particular illustrator seems to excel at.
- Discuss the fact that illustrators, like authors, tend to find that their style matches certain themes better than others: some illustrators have very distinctive spiky styles which are less suitable for gentle domestic comedy, whereas others have rounded colourful styles which don't work so well in mystery stories.
- Find a variety of illustrated poetry anthologies and compare illustrations of poems from different illustrators.
- Give children opportunities to explore their own illustrative styles. Poems are ideal starting points as children can explore different themes and decide which kinds of poems they enjoy illustrating. Ask them to explain their choices.
- Encourage groups of children to do mini-projects on different illustrators whose work they admire.
- Invite an illustrator to come into school and talk about their work. Try visiting [www.booktrusted.co.uk](http://www.booktrusted.co.uk) to find an illustrator who lives near you.
- Find out more about your favourite illustrators. Publishers' websites which have illustrator biographies include [www.bloomsbury.com](http://www.bloomsbury.com) and [www.orchardbooks.co.uk](http://www.orchardbooks.co.uk) (this gives links to individual illustrators' websites).

