This sculpture by Donald Maclean Patterson, in the University of Canterbury (New Zealand) Education Library, quotes the following Maori proverb:

“Ko te manu e kai ana i te hua o te ngahere, nōna te ngahere. Ko te manu e kai ana i te hua o te mātauranga, nōna te ao.”

“The bird who partakes of the fruit of the tree, theirs is the forest. The bird who partakes of the fruit of knowledge, theirs is the world.”

There are many advantages of using children's literature, including picture books as tools to teach concepts across the curriculum: in science, social studies, mathematics, art, and other curriculum topics. Some of them are:

1) **Trade books (versus textbooks) are multi-dimensional, not one-dimensional.** The authors and editors of textbooks (non-fiction in nature) must be concerned about such things as achieving specific curricular objectives, accuracy, readability, balance, bias, etc. They are often very "ordered" and standardized in format. The authors of trade books, both fiction and non-fiction titles, do not necessarily have the same formatting constraints placed on them, which opens up many creative and surprising possibilities (Rutherford, 1991, p.27).

2) **Classroom management of curriculum** -- Most teachers are frustrated by the lack of time to cover all the curriculum topics. Assuming a teacher covers more than one curriculum subject, integrating curriculum topics such as literature and science, for instance, can save more time than trying to teach the concepts separately (Welchman-Tischler, 1992, p. 1).

3) **Universal literature themes** -- Good quality literature, including picture books, contain universal themes that make them, in many ways, "ageless:" they can be enjoyed by student of all ages (Carr, 2001, p. 146). The use of literature to teach curricular concepts helps relate the concept being taught to real-life situations, bringing the concept into the child's world (Whitin, 1992, p. xii).
4) **Motivational** -- Approaching a topic from a different "angle" through literature, including picture books, can increase student motivation to learn (Lake, 1993, p. 18). A good story is a strong teaching tool, which gives a concrete, "contained" perspective for learning or thinking about a topic (Carr, 2001, p. 147). Good literature books captivate the child's interest and information is rapidly absorbed through them (Butzow, 1989, p. 6).

5) **Picture books: text and illustration interplay** -- In a good picture book, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts: the pictures do more than reflect the text, but serve to move the story forward in a way that the text can not do alone. The interplay of text and picture in a good picture book engage the reader on a deeper level, "on both an intellectual and an emotional level (Huck, 1997, p. 199)." Picture books are "bicultural, that they share qualities of books and the visual arts” (Hammond, 1994, p. 11). For instance, “reading” a picture book engages children in both the visual and the language arts. “Because of the many parallels between art and language arts, learning becomes connected and cumulative when the two disciplines are correlated in the classroom” (North Texas Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts, 1998, p. 1). I would use this same argument in using children’s literature, in general, across any curriculum subject. Because picture books use more than one learning style (visual and written) they are an excellent teaching tool.

6) **Multiple learning styles** -- Trade books, both fiction and non-fiction, as well as specialty books such as pop-up and activity books, make use of more than the linguistic learning style. The visual and tactile element in some of these books means they are able to capture the interest of reluctant readers, and those whose strength is not necessarily learning though words alone.

7) **Different/imaginative approach** -- Trade books can awaken the child in each one of us, which is not a bad thing, and is sometimes easily misplaced in our daily lives. The use of literature in teaching any subject can be a new, creative, and imaginative way to approach a topic. There is often a "surprise" element in literature, which can lead to many teachable moments, and unexpected higher level thinking opportunities.

8) **Concrete examples** -- The simple but imaginative worlds within picture books, and all literature, can provide students with an excellent and motivating introduction to complex curriculum topics. It is a great way to introduce a topic, especially to struggling learners in that it allows you to work from concrete, "simple" examples, before moving onto more abstract and complex examples (Carr, 2001, p. 148). It is a great "hook" into a lesson, and is easy to read in a short amount of time.

9) **Fiction: providing the reader a new "voice"** -- Excellent fiction titles can often stir up an emotional response that may be lacking in some non-fiction titles. It can provide the reader with a new point of view that may create a sense of empathy for the characters in the story. These responses can often lead the reader to become engaged with a topic, which can be expanded upon by connecting these responses with related curriculum topics in the classroom.
10) **Fun factor** -- The last reason to me is one of the most important: the use of good literature in imaginative ways, to teach curriculum topics, makes learning fun! As stated above, many literature titles, both fiction and non-fiction, celebrate the often complex dance between the visual and written forms of communication, two very powerful ways of communication we use everyday.

**References:**


