

An Overview of Selected Visual Illustrations in Elementary Literatures of Globalight Book Publishers, Ibadan, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Improving elementary education is no doubt, key to attaining and sustaining a meaningful learned, and egalitarian society. Its fundamentals are embedded in the affective domain with a thrust in visual cognition, significantly in early childhood education. Affective illustrations particularly in pictures are argued to speak more than a thousand words. Interestingly, this assertion is presumably responsible for why Nigerian elementary books were proliferated with illustrational pictures in contemporary times. A development that is not only welcoming but has come to stay in Nigerian elementary education, owing to its value in terms of pupils' comprehension and illumination. As such, this paper examines selected books published by Globalight, Ibadan. The method adopted is bibliographical, shortlisting six of its plethora of publications to critical visualization; particularly from external, internal, topographical, and illustrational standpoints using design principles. The finding revealed adequacy of design elements, through some improvement, will go a long way in stimulating pupils' learning potentials and tendencies.

Key Words: child, comprehension, elementary education, learning, visual illustration

INTRODUCTION

A glance at the early child education section of a library or bookshop reveals that illustrated books dominate texts is quite common in early child literature (Jalongo, 2004). Children's elementary book is an important literary product of visual art

which covers a wide range from simple to more detailed realistic drawings. The child's age is a determinate factor that determines how book illustrations are developed to aid better understanding and development of a child's mental state.

Illustration is stated as the visual art of depicting subjects with the aid of drawing, sketches, computer-aided graphics, and photography in creative measures to tell stories or teach lessons in simple and easily remembered ways. In any picture book, the illustrations and the words should be read by focusing attention on book illustrations for children to attain deeper meaning (Considine, 1986). Illustrations are associated with the initial stages of reading which serve as a key to children's understanding of prints before they can read (Manning, 2004), these help children develop their language and literacy skills and also provide visual context for text.

Visual literacy is the ability to use visuals for intentional communication (Babson & Nkami-Eval, 2012) or construct meaning with images which therefore makes visual illustration has his right based on the idea that illustrated images can be read, whether used by themselves or integrated with written text sharpens the perception of children, stimulate imaginations and increases the sense of observation and that meaning can be communicated through the process of reading.

Children's elementary books refer to a special type of book in which stories are created and expressed through interaction between words and images (Nikolajeva, 1997). This can also be described as content that expresses the use of words and illustrations to aid children's understanding. Illustrated books are learning tools, information resources, and sign systems for children's cognitive domain of child development. As a distinct genre, illustrated books provide children with a narrative language model and visual experience. Children can use illustrated books to appreciate art, learn a language, or gain experience about their environments. People who are involved in the study and reading of children's books believe that visual illustrations in children's books play several important roles (Wright, 2008).

Elementary books arouse images of brightly colored, beautifully illustrated books that beg to be read. No matter the age limits, it is still enjoyable to read due to the vibrant pictures, rich and evocative language, and poignant and meaningful themes. Illustrated books speak to individuals the same way photographs do as they touch emotions, delight the senses, appeal to the whimsy, and bring back memories of one's childhood. Children's books and their illustrations "can hook children into a lifelong love of reading" (Reading Is Fundamental, 2010), which is essential for the further development and ability to perform well both in school and later in life. However, images in children's books have much more to offer as it's used to locate a story in time and space, to create mood, or to emphasize symbolic meaning to children (Norton, 1987).

Globalight Books Limited is an offshoot of the Light Books and Prints Ventures that engages in the production and marketing of children and educational books to promote and stimulate the reading culture in children. Globalight book series are developed by seasoned authors and practicing educationists, are based on the recently revised National Education Curriculum for Schools in Nigeria in a simple comprehensible language, and are found educative, captivating, and interesting among children. The reader series embeds positive aspects of life in little children and they derive moral benefits from the stories such as honesty, fairness, kindness, and hard work which the growing minds can emulate (Ayoola, 2009).

Images introduce and explain the world to children in a comprehensive way even before they can read. It allows the children to get accustomed to new words and build up their vocabulary through both verbal and visual references provided by the book. It serves as a valuable tool for developing analytical and interpretive skills. By analyzing the visual elements of a book such as color, composition, and perspective, children can learn to read images with the same critical eye that they read text. This skill can enhance their enjoyment of art and allow them to better understand the messages and themes conveyed through illustrations to develop the cognitive, emotional, and sensory skills for learning and growth in a child (Iris, 2023).

For the child, who is exposed to many uncontrolled images today to be drawn to the area where there is quality learning, it is necessary to rearrange the visual confusion and point out the quality images. The fundamental purpose for the use of illustration has been undermined in various literature books which has slowed down the rate of learning processes of young minds and interested individuals who consume words on a written page. Various research has discovered that the use of illustrations in children's books has encouraged young minds to develop an academic interest in books which helps in the development of children's visual stimuli. Moreover, based on research, Nigerian publishers and children illustrators have been undermined and little or no research has been carried out on which there is a need to make references to them for documentary and research purposes.

This study is primarily geared towards promoting visual literacy among pupils at the elementary level in early childhood education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Analyzing Illustrations in Children's Books

A child is sensitive to illustration even before they speak. Illustrated books have an art visual object which introduces the children to elementary works of literature. The recognition of visual literacy as a stimulus visual cortex of the child has led to the publication of illustrated books without words for babies and children of preschool age. Pictures should be created as clear, understandable, and noticeable as possible. Visual literacy is an important topic in illustrated books, mostly they attempt to convince parents to read the text, but they tend to learn or understand when they are looking at the images. Moreover, the unity and consistency created by visual elements like colors, lines, spaces, shapes, patterns, and dimensions in illustrated books which express parallelism to children's developmental level should reflect the child's nature along with drawing his attention to the child's imagination, creativity, exploration, dynamicity, adventure, enthusiastic and sincerity (Bodrova & Leong, 2013) will make the child incline to the book. Hixson (2003) suggests that the first thing that has to be kept in mind when analyzing pictures is to know what the picture is about as the child places visual images of

entities and objects around his mind through illustrated books as to be conditional upon his conceptual thinking.

There are specific artistic elements of illustrations that attract children's interest: for example, the kind of color, size, and level of realism in a picture with the page's layout play a magnificent role in pictures.

Color in Pictures

Color has a vital importance in the children's world, the level of brightness of a picture can affect the child's preference toward a picture. Combining lines and colors is perhaps the common way in which artists convey mood and emotion in picture books. If visuals, which children see and touch are not attractive on the page, their desire for knowing and recognizing may be negatively affected. Although the color palette greatly affects the overall feeling of a picture book conveyed to the reader, its selection, even though based on what the story needs, seems to be an intuitive process for a majority of illustrators. Samiya (2021) states that children prefer colored images to white and black to naturally activate their curiosity and the will to explore. A development that started with the Alawiye series by Odunjo Publishes supposedly in the 1970s has grown to full-blown color in prints and has enabled the learning of the Yoruba Language in the western part of Nigeria. When the first picture books were published, the pictures were in black and white, but as (Cleaver and Shorey 1993) have mentioned pictures became less popular when colored, printed picture books became widespread. They show that children preferred color illustrations to black and white illustrations regardless of the style of writing. There are not too many colors to distract a child from an illustration, instead, they are been attracted to it unlike it is in black and white. In addition, color is the creation of a mood. The mood can be triggered by many sources. Colors often convey the emotional load of the picture, "such as paintings done in tones of grey to express dreariness/unhappiness" (Hladíková, 2013).

Size of Pictures

Children's insatiable visual curiosity lets them approach every stimulus with great interest, different sizes of illustrated books can respond to children's visual curiosity by raising their attention based on their disparities in age range. To

illustrate a larger picture can be more attractive for children than smaller pictures because it creates clearer and more meaningful messages which cannot be conveyed with words (Marshall 1988).

Realism of Pictures

The illustration in a literary book is often a translation of the book resulting from the individual interpretation of work content by an artist who then builds a free impression around the text (Wincencjusz-Patyna, 2008). Children generally like fiction more than non-fiction books (Marshall, 1988) because they can live in their imaginative world where they might find things that do not exist in the real world. The realism of the pictures is important to some degree than imaginative pictures which are relevant to the children's perception and experience. Graphic illustrated designs are more statically based on the mimetic imaging, expressiveness, detail, and color of the composition. Children also can transfer illustrations due to the realism of the pictures as achieves or decorations.

Page Layout

Designing is the creation of a plan for the construction of an object which plays a vital role in book design. It involves the arrangement of various elements on a page, this usually involves the specific placement of images, text, and style to make the page more presentable, readable, and appealing to the eyes. The illustration arrangement in the elementary book must be located in a position that grabs the attention of the children at a glance.

The composition of an illustration decides on the arrangement of visual elements such as portion, balance, and harmony determines the artistic value and the nature of its visual and emotional impact on the child. The illustrations in books are works of fine art that a child encounters and help develop children's interest in the book. It also creates an opportunity for child speech development in the book and stimulates the child's mental cognitive process in child development.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual approach for this paper is based on children's visual perception of illustration in books which aid the children's perceptual development. This

analysis shows that there is a dynamic relationship between words and images, and it also shows the important role of visual design and the multiple meanings offered by genre. Visual perception is dependent on the development of visual acuity, contrast, sensitivity, and color perception of illustrated images. The ability to process and organize visual information (Alexandra and Lisa, 2010) plays a role in identifying and classifying information. Many physiological and psychological factors can have an impact on the depth of visual perception in terms of categorization and interpretation of meaning. *Visual perception* is one of the major perceptual senses in human life, and the development of the Internet and digital imaging technology has increased the scope of scholarly interest in this area (Barat, 2007, Chandler, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative approach method bibliographically shortlisting six elementary books of Globalight books, Ibadan. These elementary books contain illustrations and stories which was intended for research to facilitate learning in early childhood education. Collected data were visually analyzed particularly from the external, internal, typographical, and illustrational standpoints with the use of design principles.

RESULT, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Book Selection Process and Analysis Criteria

Illustrated picture books were published by Globalight Books in Ibadan for children majorly in their early stages, which can be found in school bookstores in the Southwestern part of Nigeria. These shortlisted books include 'The Ant and The Elephant', 'School Bus Ride', 'My Father's Dream', 'Cock and Bull Story', 'Nothing Last Forever' and 'Bengo's Dream and the wise man' which were addressed in this study.

These books were examined in two phases, which are, external structure and internal structure. In this process, features of internal structure such as theme, topic, subject matter language, texture, surface, topography, illustration, color

separation, and page layouts were discussed as well as taking into consideration the physical structure and basic design principles while the Features of the external structure of children's story books from Global light books includes, Physical attributes, cover & binding, size, weight.

1. The analysis of “THE ANT AND THE ELEPHANT” in terms of visual design elements and physical structure, the below findings were obtained and discussed.

The book titled The Ant and the Elephant is a story that speaks volumes on the fact that greatness has nothing to do with size. The story was written in strong but simple language to amuse as well as strengthen the children's vocabulary. The story was written and illustrated by Femi Fat. The illustrations were majorly in Ink and Pen. The book is sampled among children of ages 4-5 years.

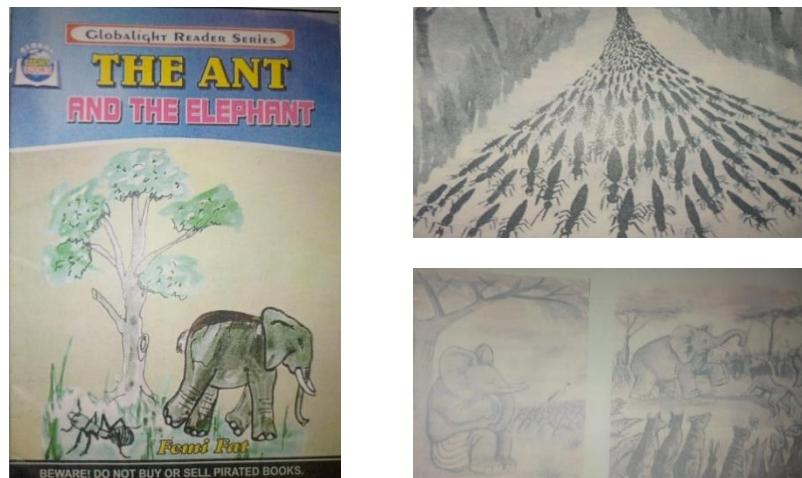


Figure 1. Outer and Inner Illustrations of the Ant and the Elephant
Source: Adesile, Mercy Funmilayo (2023)

The front page of the book comprises both pen and water-colored techniques to depict the size and the volume of the animals. The font lettering usage includes Cooper and Bauhaus, the fonts are readable with a colored hairline along the title of the book on the front cover. The color usage includes green for vegetation, black for zoomorphic skin, and blue for the sky.

2. The analysis of “SCHOOL BUS RIDE” in terms of visual design elements and physical structure, the below findings were obtained and discussed.

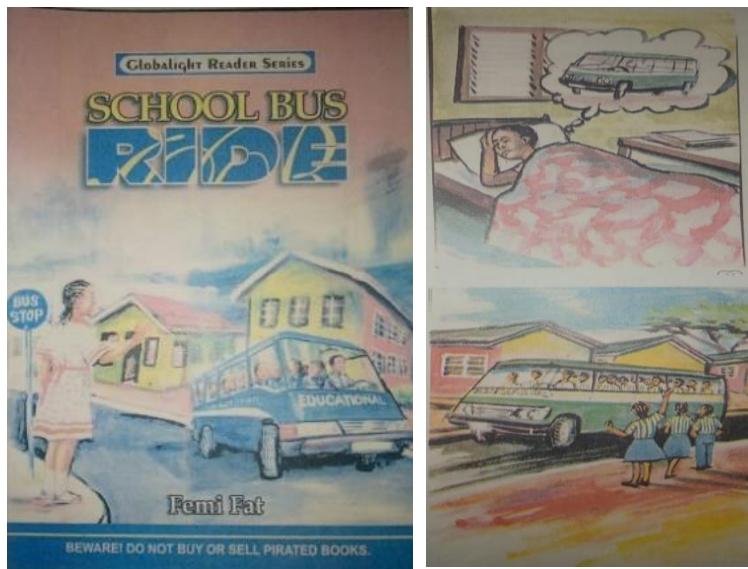


Figure 2: Outer and Inner Illustrations of School Bus Ride
Source: Adesile, Mercy Funmilayo (2023)

The school bus ride is a story that opens up the quiet side of some childhood fantasies. It is the story of two girls who represented their school in the prestigious UNICEF Verbal and Quantitative Aptitude quiz competition, where they won a beautiful luxurious bus for their school. The book was written and illustrated by Femi Fat. The book is sampled for children of ages 6-7 years.

The techniques used in the illustration are both pen, pen, and gouache. The language used in the literature was simple and easily digestible for pupils within the age group. Vibrant colors were used in the illustration to depict the vegetation, topography, buildings, life, and various activities that were carried on in the comprehension passages. The front cover page of the book is illustrated in watercolor with an illustration of Bintu waving at the school bus. The font lettering usage includes Adobe Garamond Pro and Gill Sans Ultra Bold which was textured, the fonts are readable with a colored hairline along the title of the book on the front cover.

3. The analysis of “My Father’s Dream” in terms of visual design elements and physical structure, the below findings were obtained and discussed.

“The downfall of a man is not the end of his life.” If a fallen man can rise again, he might still make it to the expected end. My Father’s Dream is a story that tells about the rise and fall of Bamise in a straightforward chronological narrative essay.

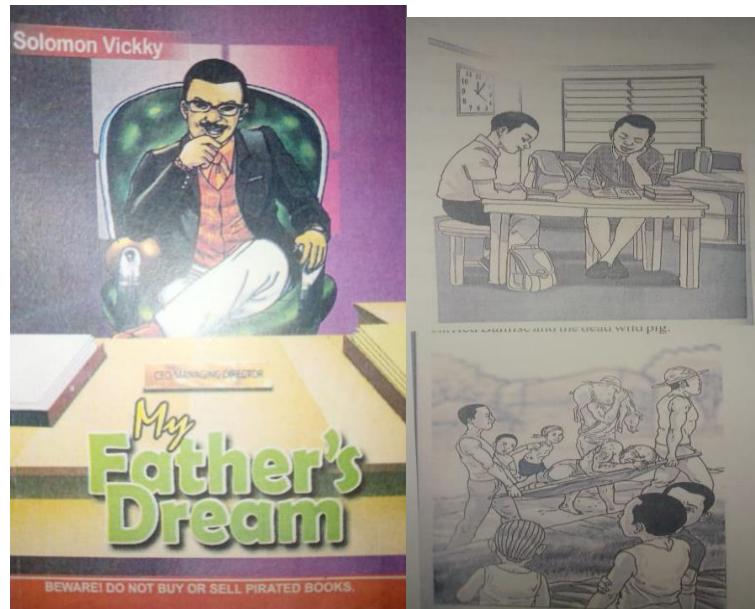


Figure 3. Outer and Inner Illustrations of My Father’s Dream
Source: Adesile, Mercy Funmilayo (2023)

The story was also set in a small village. The technique used in the illustration is mainly pen and ink. It is sampled for children of ages 7-9 years. The book is illustrated and written by Solomon Vickky. The front page of the book was illustrated in digital painting with an illustration of the coming to reality of his father’s dream for Bamise to be a successful man. The language of the literature was simple, easily digestible, and contained potential educational value to pupils within the age group. The font lettering usage includes Mistral and Berlin Sans FB Demi the fonts are readable with a colored hairline along the title of the book on the front cover. The color usage includes a split complimentary of Purple, blue, and green to create interest of harmony and contrast in the composition.

4. The analysis of “COCK AND BULL STORY” in terms of visual design elements and physical structure, the below findings were obtained and discussed.

Cock and Bull story is a book that takes the reader on a pleasant journey through the animal kingdom. The story teaches the lesson of honesty and faithfulness using popular figurative expressions. Cock and bull story is an idiomatic expression which is interpreted to be a great lie. The book is illustrated and written by Femi Fat. The technique used in the illustration is pencil pastel which is of vibrant colors that depict the vegetation, animals, and events. Moreover, the usage of artistic elements such as lines, shapes, texture, composition, and color was fully kept into consideration to make the work more interesting and realistic. The book is sampled for children of ages 6-7 years.

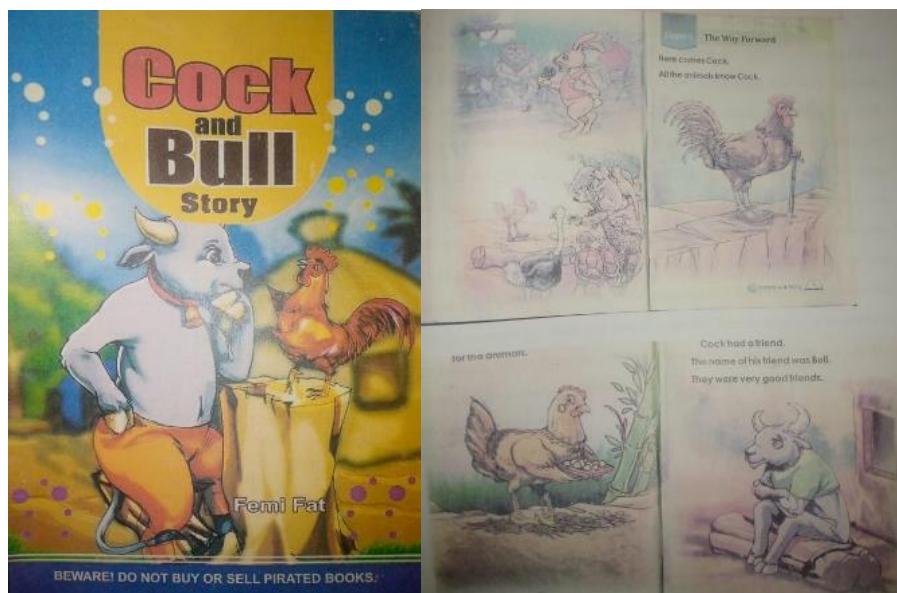


Figure 4. Outer and Inner Illustrations of Cock and Bull Story
Source: Adesile, Mercy Funmilayo (2023)

The front cover page is illustrated in digital painting with an illustration of Bull paying attention to the Cock. The language of the literature was simple, easily digestible, and contained potential educational value to pupils within the age group. The font lettering usage includes Impact and Bernard MT Condensed, the

fonts are readable with both black and white hairlines along the title of the book on the front cover.

5. The analysis of “NOTHING LAST FOREVER” in terms of visual design elements and physical structure, the below findings were obtained and discussed.

Rich Jeke Orisa treated his brother’s family very harshly and without mercy when they suffered hard times as a result of the accident of their breadwinner, Pere Orisa. However, the tides turned when the economic meltdown eroded the wealth of Jeke and City Bank wanted to sell his properties to recover his non-performing loan. Ironically, Chris, his nephew, was the CEO of City Bank. Jake, now eighty years old, prostrated for his young nephew, begging him to save his properties from auction. How did Chris react to his wicked Uncle’s request? Find out the climax of the relationship between Chris and his Uncle Jeke in the story which exemplifies the adage, ‘You reap what you sow’. The book is illustrated and written by Femi Fat. The technique used in the illustration is Pen and Ink. It is sampled children of ages 8-10 years.

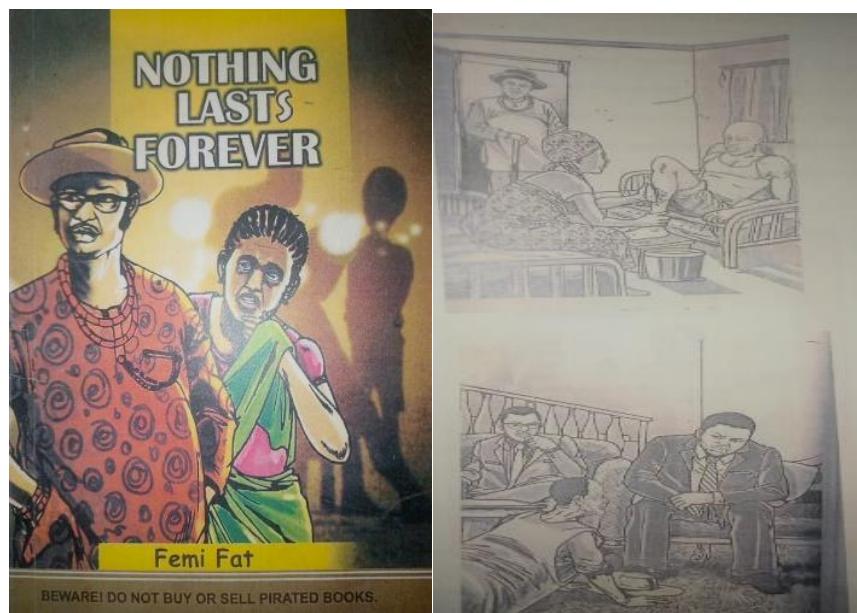


Figure 5. Outer and Inner Illustrations of Nothing Last Forever
Source: Adesile, Mercy Funmilayo (2023)

The front cover page is illustrated in digital painting with an illustration of rich Jeke Orisa in wealthy attire and a contented mood while Mrs. Orisa is in wretched attire to depict the status of being poor with tears and agony running down her face. The images represented in silhouette depict the children of Pere Orisa the deceased. The language of the literature was simple, easily digestible, and contained potential educational value to pupils within the age group. The font lettering usage includes Impact and Exotc350 Bd BT, the fonts are readable with both black and white hairlines along the title of the book on the front cover. The color usage for the background includes a monochromatic color of yellow used in various tints and shades.

6. The analysis of “BENGO’S DREAM AND THE WISE MAN” in terms of visual design elements and physical structure, the below findings were obtained and discussed.

In Bengo’s dream and the wise man, Bengo had a dream in which a wise man took him on a trip across the sea to Koro Island and Jolie Island. His experience in Koro Island was shocking and horrifying while those of Jolie Island were so pleasant and joyous that he wanted to live there forever. The book was written and illustrated by Niyi Josef. The Techniques used in the illustration are both pen and ink and digital paintings. The book is a sample for children of ages 6-7 years.

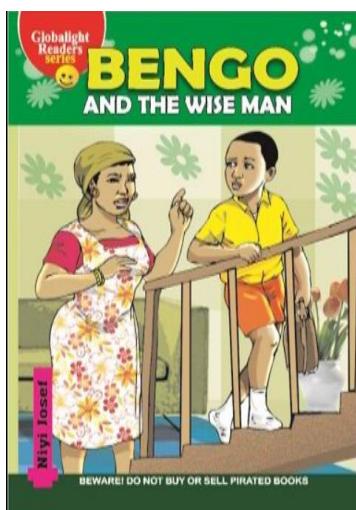


Figure 5. Outer and Inner Illustrations of Bengo and the Wise Man
Source: Adesile, Mercy Funmilayo (2023)

The front cover page is illustrated in digital painting with an illustration of Bengo and his mother in the room staircase. Bengo has a look of discouragement on his face as he intends to stop his academics but his mother was encouraging him not to do so. The language of the literature was simple, easily digestible, and contained potential educational value to pupils within the age group. The font lettering usage includes Berlin Sans FB Demi and Berlin Sans FB, the fonts are readable with both black and white hairlines along the title of the book on the front cover. The color usage includes an analogous color of yellow and green with a floral pattern displaced randomly on the book's front page.

DISCUSSION

An illustrator must be aware of his responsibility towards others. Stories deserve to be told and the illustrator has the power to tell it in a very good and attractive way which may give diverse methods of interpreting the stories by the audience. Several classic children's books demonstrate the power that artistic choices have to subtly convey feelings and emotions which also needed to set the plot's momentum. The most popular illustrator used by Globalight is Femi Fat. In the story, *The Ant and the Elephant*, Femi Fat uses the elements and principles of design to advance his story. This is done by gradually shifting the proportion of the illustrations and text size relative to the white spaces on the book pages. As the story progresses, the text gets smaller and less prominent as the illustration gradually creeps from a small box on one page onto the second page of each double spread. Femi Fat plays on the interaction of pens and ink with the pages themselves to capture the idea that children understand the yearning to travel to a distant land where wild things are to distract them from the frustrations of everyday life. Solomon Vicky uses the same technique in '*My Father's Dream*' to show exploration of the unknown and the satisfaction of education.

CONCLUSION

Analyzing children's picture books has shown in all indications that children learn how to develop and use illustrations as an aspect of learning to absorb the most meaning out of what is around them. Most children are taught by their parents from an early age by way of example and modeling how to verbally

communicate with illustrations and pictures in children's books. Illustrations in children's books have contributed to the development of improving children's comprehension and indirect learning vocabularies.

Globalight books are rich with teaching opportunities that introduce children to a vast range of illustration styles, inspiring their artistic growth. Moreover, children can discover new concepts and add words and meanings to their speaking vocabularies by listening as it provides both entertainment and information while developing the desire to read and write.

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