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## ASSESSING THE EFFICACY OF RUBRICS IN ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN YOUNG LEARNERS OF ENGLISH THROUGH ANALYSIS OF PICTURE BOOKS

*Abstract:* Teaching young learners to analyze and evaluate literary texts appropriate to their age and interests can help them develop critical thinking skills. As children take part in critical thinking, their language skills improve because they are encouraged to develop and use more complex language with words like “because”, phrases with “if” and “then” and different verb tenses. On the other hand, as young learners’ language development progresses, their ability to think critically grows as well. Engaging students in critical thinking could involve seeing relationships between events, drawing inferences, analyzing events, synthesizing evidence and evaluating both the content of a text and the language used to express ideas contained within it. Critical thinking is a fundamental skill for both language and literacy success but it is very difficult to evaluate it. Therefore, the paper will analyze rubrics as a very effective tool in teaching English to young learners when reading picture books. In Pedagogical implications part, the paper will provide ideas for creating rubrics to assess critical thinking skills. For the purpose of this paper, young learners will be reflecting on picture books using reasoning to support their interpretation and evaluation of selected books. On the one hand, the assessment will be based on the given rubrics, on the other hand, the rubrics themselves will be assessed as well.

*Keywords:* picture books, rubrics, teaching English to young learners.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Developing critical thinking skills is widely recognized as a fundamental objective in the 21<sup>st</sup> century education, as it equips learners with the ability to

analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information effectively. The Paris Declaration of the European Union (2015) emphasizes the significance of enhancing the capacity of children and young people to engage in critical thinking and exercise judgement and perception. This enables them to comprehend realities, discern between factual information and opinions, identify propaganda, and resist all forms of indoctrination. As outlined by the Council of Europe, one year later, 2016, critical thinking encompasses the skills necessary to assess and form judgments about various materials. By developing critical thinking skills, students are empowered to analyze new information, ideas, alternative perspectives, and ways of life, enabling them to determine their acceptability or desirability (2018). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the demand for critical thinking has become more pressing, given the immediate accessibility of information, the nature of modern jobs, and the prevalence of fake news (2021). As a consequence, over time, demands for critical thinking skills have become greater and more pressing in the field of education as well.

In the context of education and English language learning, nurturing critical thinking skills holds particular significance for young learners. Not only does it elevate their language proficiency, but it also cultivates their cognitive abilities and equips them to navigate a progressively intricate world. Hence, the creation of rubrics tailored to the specific context, such as age group and language skill assessment, can prove invaluable in establishing a consistent marking framework for teachers. Moreover, rubrics offer defined criteria to individual assessors, promoting uniformity in evaluation, especially when multiple assessors are involved (Popham, 1997).

However, rubrics have faced criticism for their narrow focus on specific tasks and for not adequately addressing the essential skill(s) necessary for mastery. Additionally, the presence of lengthy descriptors often discourages teachers from utilizing them, necessitating a balance between concise and comprehensive descriptors that prioritize usability for assessment and learning purposes (Ibid.). Despite receiving criticism, rubrics are widely utilized as an assessment tool across all levels of education. They encompass both cognitive and generic skills, aiming to enhance the objectivity of scoring (Reddy & Andrade, 2010; Riebe & Jackson, 2014; Velasco-Martinez & Tojar-Hurtado, 2018). Due to their distinct characteristics, rubrics enable evaluators to gauge the level of cognitive or generic skills by employing a combination of numeric ratings and descriptive explanations (Bhutta, 2006). As a result, rubrics have emerged as a valuable tool for assessing critical thinking skills, providing educators with a structured framework to evaluate students' higher-order thinking abilities.

Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to explore the efficacy of rubrics as instruments for both cultivating and assessing critical thinking skills among young English learners during their analysis of picture books through oral discussions. The assessment process will be based on predetermined rubrics that outline the expected critical thinking skills, allowing educators to estimate students’ progress in a systematic manner. Additionally, the paper underscores the importance of evaluating the rubrics themselves to ensure their validity, reliability, and alignment with the desired learning outcomes. As a step further, this study seeks to offer practical guidance and recommendations for educators and researchers interested in implementing rubrics to evaluate and promote critical thinking abilities among young EFL learners.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The primary focus of this paper was to investigate the effectiveness of rubrics as tools for promoting and evaluating critical thinking skills in young English learners during the analysis of picture books through oral discussions in class. The research question that guided this study was: How well do rubrics function in fostering and assessing critical thinking abilities in young learners of English when engaging in the analysis of picture books?

The research follows a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the impact of rubric-based assessments on young EFL learners’ critical thinking skills. The participants included in this study were 50 young learners (from 7 to 11 years of age) enrolled in primary schools in Serbia, representing a diverse range of linguistic backgrounds and proficiency levels in English. The study was conducted over a period of six months, allowing sufficient time for implementing rubric-based assessments, analyzing the data, and drawing meaningful conclusions.

2.1. Sample

Table 1. Research sample

N = 4 female teachers	T1 – 14 years of TE	T2 – 15 years of TE	T3 – 17 years of TE	T4 – 13 years of TE
N = 50 students	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade
	N = 11	N = 12	N = 15	N = 12
Sex	F = 29		M = 21	

The research sample (see Table 1) consisted of a total of 50 young learners of primary school, age 7 to 11. Among them, there were 11 students from the 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 12 students from the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 15 students from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and 12 students from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. In terms of gender distribution, there were 29 female participants and 21 male participants. The students were selected on a voluntary basis with the approval of their English language teachers. All students who participated in the research attended private English language lessons twice a week. Four English language teachers who worked with these students during the research process were interviewed, and their reflections on rubrics were included in the qualitative data results. Since the teachers had a similar duration of teaching experience (TE), the author did not focus on that aspect in this research.

### *2.1. Research procedure*

The research procedure involved several stages. Firstly, a pre-assessment was conducted using a validated instrument – *the Cornell Critical Thinking Test* (CCTT) to measure the baseline levels of critical thinking skills in the participants. The Cornell Critical Thinking Test (CCTT) was first published in 1985 by Robert H. Ennis and Jason Millman. The CCTT has since undergone revisions and updates to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness in assessing critical thinking skills. For the purpose of this research the author used the free online version of the test.

This pre-assessment served as a baseline for comparison with the post-assessment results. Next, a series of instructional interventions were designed to explicitly teach critical thinking skills using picture books as engaging and accessible learning resources. Rubrics were developed to assess and evaluate the participants' critical thinking abilities during and after the instructional interventions.

Following the instructional phase, a post-assessment was administered using the same validated instrument as the pre-assessment to measure the participants' growth in critical thinking skills. The data collected from the pre- and post-assessments were analyzed using statistical methods to identify any significant changes in the participants' critical thinking abilities.

Furthermore, to gain deeper insights into the participants' experiences with rubric-based assessments and their impact on critical thinking development, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The students selected for the interviews were those who showed the most significant improvement in their critical thinking skills. Additionally, teachers who were involved in the research process and worked with the students were also interviewed to gather their perspectives on the use of rubrics in assessing critical thinking abilities.

## *2.2 Research objectives*

The objectives of this research were as follows:

- To explore the existing critical thinking skills of young learners of English in relation to the analysis of picture books;
- To design and develop rubrics tailored to assess critical thinking skills specific to picture book analysis;
- To implement the use of rubrics in teaching critical thinking skills to young learners during picture book analysis activities;
- To assess the impact of rubrics on enhancing critical thinking skills in young learners through pre- and post-intervention evaluations;
- To gather qualitative data through observations and interviews to gain insights into the perceptions and experiences of both teachers and students regarding the use of rubrics in teaching and assessing critical thinking skills.

## 3. RESULTS

The first phase was the Pre-assessment phase. At this point, young learners were evaluated before any intervention and instruction on the baseline of their critical thinking skills when analyzing picture books. For this purpose, a specially created rubrics were used. These numbers and statistics provided insights into the participants' initial levels of critical thinking skills, and were used for comparison with post-assessment data collected after the intervention phase.

The second phase was the Intervention phase. This phase included structured lessons and activities in which students were engaged with picture books and applied critical thinking strategies. Critical thinking skills that were practiced included the most common ones, such as: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation (Al-Rahbi et al., 2022).

During this stage, the teacher conducted lessons that actively engaged students with picture books and guided them through the process of analyzing and evaluating the content using critical thinking skills. The rubrics served as a framework to assess and provide feedback on students' performance in these activities. The intervention included the following steps: 1) Introduction and Explanation: The teacher introduced the concept of critical thinking and its importance in analyzing picture books. The purpose and relevance of using rubrics as assessment tools were explained to the students; 2) Model Thinking Strategies: The teacher modeled various critical thinking strategies such as making predictions, asking questions, making inferences, and analyzing characters or themes. This provided

students with a clear understanding of how to apply these strategies during picture book analysis; 3) Guided Practice: Students were engaged in guided practice activities where they applied the critical thinking strategies discussed. The teacher provided support and scaffolding as needed, encouraging students to think critically and justify their thoughts and interpretations; 4) Independent Practice: Students independently analyzed and evaluated picture books using the critical thinking strategies learned. They applied the rubrics to assess their own understanding and to self-evaluate their performance; 5) Collaborative Learning: Collaborative activities such as group discussions or peer evaluations were conducted, allowing students to share their thoughts, insights, and interpretations of the picture books. They provided feedback to their peers based on the rubrics, promoting dialogue and the exchange of ideas; 6) Ongoing Assessment and Feedback: The teacher continuously assessed students' progress using the rubrics, providing timely feedback and guidance. The feedback helped students understand their strengths and areas for improvement in their critical thinking skills.

By implementing this intervention phase, students were provided with a structured and supportive environment to develop and apply critical thinking skills during picture book analysis. The use of rubrics as assessment tools ensured that students received clear criteria and feedback, enhancing their growth in critical thinking abilities. The whole process aimed at fostering students' critical thinking (Lau, 2003).

In the third phase Post-Assessment was conducted. After the completion of the intervention phase, a post-assessment was conducted to evaluate the impact of rubrics on the development of critical thinking skills in young learners. The same validated instrument used in the pre-assessment was administered to measure the participants' critical thinking skills at the end of the intervention. The assessment included tasks that required students to analyze and evaluate picture books using the critical thinking strategies taught during the intervention.

The quantitative data collected from the post-assessment were analyzed using common statistical methods, including mean, standard deviation, and t-tests, to compare and analyze the pre- and post-assessment scores (see Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for Pre- and post-assessment phase

N = 50	Pre-Assessment Score	Post-Assessment Score
M	60.34	67.24
t-value	-4.27	
DF	49	

The paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the pre-assessment scores and post-assessment scores of 50 participants. The mean of pre-assessment score was 60.34, and the mean of post-assessment score was 67.24. The t-value obtained was -4.27, with 49 degrees of freedom. The negative t-value suggests that, on average, the post-assessment scores were significantly higher than the pre-assessment scores. The magnitude of the t-value (-4.27) indicates a substantial difference between the two means. The extremely low p-value ( $p < 0.0001$ ) indicates that the observed difference is unlikely to have occurred by chance alone. The small p-value suggests strong evidence against the null hypothesis, which assumes no difference between the pre- and post-assessment scores. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis, concluding that there is a significant difference between the pre- and post-assessment scores. The reason for this could be attributed to the occurrence of an intervention phase along with a substantial amount of instructional activities between the two assessments. Accordingly, it can be inferred that the intervention had a notable impact on the improvement of participants' critical thinking skills.

In addition to quantitative data, qualitative data was collected through interviews to gain deeper insights into the perceptions and experiences of teachers and students (participants in this research) regarding the use of rubrics and the impact on critical thinking development in EFL context. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring categories, patterns, and insights within the qualitative data.

Based on the qualitative data analysis, several categories and findings related to the impact of rubrics on young EFL learners' critical thinking skills emerged.

*Increased Engagement.* Teachers reported that the use of rubrics during picture book analysis activities increased students' engagement and active participation. Students expressed enthusiasm for the structured guidance provided by the rubrics, which helped them focus on specific critical thinking skills and criteria.

*Enhanced Self-Assessment.* Students demonstrated an improved ability to self-assess their critical thinking skills using the rubrics. They mentioned being more aware of their strengths and areas for improvement, allowing them to take ownership of their learning and set personal goals for development.

*Improved Analytical Skills.* Both teachers and students noticed an enhancement in students' analytical skills as a result of using the rubrics. Students became more skillful at identifying evidence from the text, making connections, and providing logical reasoning to support their interpretations and evaluations.

*Development of Metacognitive Skills.* The use of rubrics facilitated the development of metacognitive skills in students. They became more reflective about

their thinking processes, identifying strategies that worked well for them and adapting their approaches to different picture books and critical thinking tasks.

*Teacher Guidance and Feedback.* Teachers reported that rubrics were extremely helpful in marking in terms of being objective and consistent. Therefore, the teachers who participated in the research reported a 40% reduction in the time spent on marking.

In summary, the research findings revealed several improvements in teaching facilitated by the use of rubrics in picture book analysis. These include increased student engagement in speaking exercises, enhanced analytical skills, students' ability to self-assess their critical thinking skills using rubrics, development of metacognitive skills in students, and improved accuracy, precision, objectivity, and consistency in teachers' marking.

#### 4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Other researchers in the field have also documented similar findings. For example, Leist et al. (2012) obtained comparable results in their research. Specifically, their study demonstrated significantly higher rubric scores in post-assessments and a significant change in rubric scores over time. This indicates that the use of rubrics improved students' overall achievement in critical thinking skills, primarily because students became familiar with the focal points and the teachers' expectations regarding picture book analysis. Additionally, Saputra (2013) conducted a study that explored the necessity of establishing a standardized approach for learners to actively participate in the process of practicing critical thinking skills in the EFL classroom. These research findings emphasize the importance of teacher training to develop a comprehensive understanding of what to consider when assessing students' performances using rubrics in the English language classroom. This situation parallels the one described in this research, as both teachers and students were familiar with the assessment criteria throughout the instructional process. Similarly, Wu et al. (2021) conducted a study that underscored the significance of cultivating assessment-literate EFL teachers to enhance their assessment effectiveness, particularly in implementing assessment for learning. Consistent with the research presented in this paper, rubrics were regarded as a tool for learning rather than solely for grading purposes. Furthermore, Matshedisho (2020) suggested in his study that empiricism, standardization, and a lack of tacit knowledge restrict students' reasoning about rubrics. These limitations lead to a misalignment between students' expectations and lecturers' intentions in the utilization of rubrics. Having a clear understanding of what would be evaluated and



how it would be evaluated from the beginning proved beneficial for students in this research, leading to improved results in the post-assessment phase. Moreover, teachers were able to focus more precisely on assessing specific aspects, resulting in a reduction of time spent on grading.

Therefore, by creating rubrics and presenting them to students before the assessment phase, significant improvements in learning outcomes can be achieved. This approach allows students to be aware of the areas to focus on, improve, and learn, while enabling teachers to assess specific skills and knowledge using a precise instrument. Consequently, this ensures objectivity in grading students. Besides that, being aware of teachers' expectations could enhance students' independent learning abilities and motivation to take control of their learning. Further, a transparent grading process might potentially mitigate students' assessment anxiety, thus allowing them to learn in a positive and fostering environment.

## 5. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Several pedagogical implications can be derived from this research on using rubrics as tools for teaching critical thinking skills to young EFL learners through picture book analysis. These implications include developing comprehensive rubrics that align with critical thinking skills, such as analyzing plot structure, interpreting characters' motivations, evaluating author's intent, and synthesizing evidence from the text. It is important for these rubrics to be clear, specific, and age-appropriate to guide young learners' analysis and evaluation of picture books. It is recommended to implement a scaffolded approach in teaching critical thinking skills, gradually increasing the complexity of both picture books and corresponding rubrics as students' progress in their abilities. Providing explicit instruction on how to use the rubrics effectively, teaching learners how to interpret the criteria, apply them to their analysis, and self-assess their performance based on the rubric's standards, is also crucial. Facilitating collaborative discussions among young learners encourages dialogue, sharing interpretations, and evaluations of picture books, fostering a supportive and inclusive classroom environment. Incorporating metacognitive strategies promotes reflection on thinking processes, identification of strengths and areas for improvement, and goal-setting for future development. Recognizing the diverse needs and abilities of learners, differentiating instruction by providing additional support or extension activities, and modifying rubrics accordingly ensures they cater to the unique needs of each student. Ongoing assessment and feedback through rubrics enable continuous evaluation and timely guidance, encouraging self-reflection and self-assessment. Hence, by

implementing these pedagogical implications in the EFL classroom, educators can effectively utilize rubrics as tools to promote critical thinking skills among young learners, facilitating their ability to analyze, interpret, and evaluate picture books in English. Apart from metacognitive, analytical and assessment benefits, the application of rubrics in teaching young learners could enhance the diversity of classroom activities. Since rubrics are suited to both individual and group activities, as well as peer review, they can stimulate communication among students and allow for both educational and entertaining English lessons.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of rubrics in teaching critical thinking skills during picture book analysis activities positively impacts young learners' development of critical thinking abilities. The structured framework provided by rubrics helps students focus on specific criteria and promotes the application of critical thinking strategies. Rubrics that are appropriate for assessing learners aged 7 to 11 and clear in their criteria are effective in providing students with a clear understanding of the expectations and standards. This clarity supports accurate assessment and constructive feedback, enabling students to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. The use of picture books as a context for critical thinking activities proves to be engaging and effective for young learners, as they offer rich content that allows students to make inferences, analyze events, evaluate language usage, and develop a deeper understanding of the texts they read. It is also convenient for students who are visual learners, and, therefore, benefit from the additional context in the form of pictures. The use of rubrics in teaching critical thinking skills also promotes student engagement and encourages active participation. Students become more aware of their thinking processes, take ownership of their learning, and develop metacognitive skills by self-assessing their performance based on rubric criteria. Effective implementation of rubrics requires teachers to provide guidance, scaffolding, and timely feedback to students, as they play a vital role in modeling critical thinking strategies, facilitating discussions, and supporting students in their analysis and evaluation of picture books. Constructive feedback based on rubric assessments helps students understand their progress and areas for growth. These findings underscore the positive influence of rubrics on the cultivation of critical thinking skills in young learners and emphasize the significance of well-defined criteria, engaging activities, and teacher guidance in fostering students' critical thinking abilities. The implications derived from this research hold substantial relevance for English as a foreign language

(EFL) instruction, highlighting the importance of integrating rubrics into teaching practices. In addition to the benefits concerning students, rubrics are also practical in terms of teachers' assessment of students' work. Not only do rubrics reduce the amount of time spent on grading students' work, they also allow for more specific feedback with suggestions for improving in future language use.

In conclusion, this study highlights the significance of integrating critical thinking skills into English language instruction for young learners. By incorporating rubrics as effective assessment tools, educators can assess and nurture the development of critical thinking skills while enhancing students' language proficiency. The insights presented in this paper serve as a valuable resource for teachers seeking to foster critical thinking skills among young learners within the context of reading picture books.

## 7. POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

Having in mind that this research has some limitations, possible further investigation may be applied in the following ways: 1) Investigate the long-term impact of using rubrics on the development of critical thinking skills. Follow a cohort of young learners over an extended period to assess whether the skills acquired through rubric-based instruction are sustained and transferable to other contexts; 2) Explore the development of rubrics targeting specific critical thinking skills, such as making inferences, analyzing character development, or evaluating evidence. Investigate the effectiveness of these specialized rubrics in enhancing targeted critical thinking abilities in young learners; 3) Investigate the impact of teacher professional development programs focused on integrating rubrics into teaching practices. Explore how to train teachers to design and implement rubrics effectively and how this influences their instructional strategies and student outcomes in terms of critical thinking development; 4) Investigate the impact of rubrics on student motivation and engagement during critical thinking activities. Explore how the use of rubrics can enhance students' self-efficacy, autonomy, and intrinsic motivation to think critically and engage with picture books; 5) Examine the effectiveness of rubrics in assessing other language skills, such as writing and speaking.

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## ПРОЦЕНА ЕФИКАСНОСТИ РУБРИКА У УНАПРЕЂЕЊУ ВЕШТИНА КРИТИЧКОГ РАЗМИШЉАЊА КОД УЧЕНИКА НА МЛАЂЕМ УЗРАСТУ ИЗ ОБЛАСТИ ЕНГЛЕСКОГ ЈЕЗИКА КРОЗ АНАЛИЗУ СЛИКОВНИЦА

*Резиме:* Подучавање ученика на млађем узрасту да анализирају и процењују књижевне текстове који одговарају њиховом узрасту и интересовањима може помоћи да развију вештине критичког мишљења. Када ученици учествују у дискусијама и баве се критичким размишљањем, њихове језичке вештине се побољшавају јер се тиме они подстичу да развијају и користе сложенији језик, са речима као што је *because*, фразама са *if* и *then* и различитим глаголским временима у енглеском језику. С друге стране, како развој језика ученика на млађем узрасту напредује, расте и

њихова способност критичког мишљења. Ангажовање ученика у критичком размишљању могло би да укључи сагледавање односа између догађаја, извођење закључака, анализу догађаја, синтетизовање доказа и процену садржаја текста и језика који се користи за изражавање идеја садржаних у њему. Критичко размишљање је важна вештина за успех у учењу језика и развоју писмености, али га је веома тешко проценити. У овом раду се анализира процес стварања рубрика као веома ефикасних средстава у подучавању енглеског језика на млађем узрасту приликом читања сликовница. У оквиру педагошких импликација, представљене су идеје за креирање рубрика за процену вештина критичког мишљења. Такође, за потребе овог рада, дата је анализа критичког мишљења ученика на млађем узрасту о изабраној сликовници уз помоћ рубрике креиране за те сврхе. С једне стране, приказује се оцењивање ученичког критичког мишљења заснивано на предложеним рубрикама, а са друге стране, оцењивање саме рубрике.

*Кључне речи:* сликовнице, рубрике, подучавање енглеског као страног језика на млађем узрасту.

APPENDICES

Rubrics

Example 1: Analyzing Characters in Picture Books (Grades 1 and 2)

Criteria	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
Understanding of Characters	Demonstrates a deep understanding of the characters' motivations, feelings, and actions, providing insightful analysis supported by specific evidence from the text.	Shows a good understanding of the characters, providing analysis supported by evidence from the text.	Displays some understanding of the characters but lacks depth in analysis and evidence from the text.	Demonstrates minimal understanding of the characters and provides little to no analysis or evidence from the text.
Connections to Real Life	Makes meaningful connections between the characters' experiences and real-life situations, demonstrating insight and critical thinking.	Makes some connections between the characters' experiences and real-life situations, showing a basic understanding of relevance.	Attempts to make connections between the characters' experiences and real-life situations, but lacks depth or relevance.	Does not make connections between the characters' experiences and real-life situations.
Critical Analysis	Engages in thoughtful analysis of the characters' actions, choices, and outcomes, highlighting the author's message or themes.	Conducts some analysis of the characters' actions, choices, and outcomes, with limited focus on the author's message or themes.	Provides limited analysis of the characters' actions, choices, and outcomes, without clear consideration of the author's message or themes.	Lacks analysis of the characters' actions, choices, and outcomes, and does not address the author's message or themes.
Use of Language	Demonstrates a keen awareness of the author's use of descriptive language, figurative language, and word choice, providing insightful analysis and examples.	Shows some understanding of the author's use of descriptive language, figurative language, and word choice, providing analysis and examples.	Recognizes some aspects of the author's use of language but lacks depth in analysis or examples.	Does not recognize or analyze the author's use of language.

Example 2: Interpreting Theme in Picture Books (Grades 3 and 4)

Criteria	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
<b>Identification of Theme</b>	Clearly identifies the main theme of the picture book, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the underlying message. Provides strong evidence from the text to support the interpretation.	Identifies the main theme of the picture book, showing a solid understanding of the underlying message. Provides some evidence from the text to support the interpretation.	Attempts to identify the main theme of the picture book but lacks clarity or depth in understanding. Provides limited evidence from the text to support the interpretation.	Does not identify the main theme of the picture book and provides no evidence from the text to support the interpretation.
<b>Use of Language</b>	Demonstrates a keen awareness of the author's use of descriptive language, figurative language, and word choice, providing insightful analysis and examples.	Shows some understanding of the author's use of descriptive language, figurative language, and word choice, providing analysis and examples.	Recognizes some aspects of the author's use of language but lacks depth in analysis or examples.	Does not recognize or analyze the author's use of language.
<b>Illustrations</b>	Analyzes the illustrations' contribution to the story, including their impact on mood, tone, and character development. Provides insightful analysis supported by specific examples.	Discusses the illustrations' contribution to the story, including their impact on mood, tone, and character development. Provides analysis and examples.	Mentions the illustrations' contribution to the story but lacks depth in analysis or examples.	Does not mention or analyze the illustrations' contribution.
<b>Effectiveness of Story</b>	Evaluates the overall effectiveness of the story, considering elements such as plot, pacing, and resolution. Provides a well-supported evaluation with detailed reasoning.	Evaluates the overall effectiveness of the story, considering elements such as plot, pacing, and resolution. Provides an evaluation with reasoning.	Attempts to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the story but lacks depth or specificity in reasoning.	Does not evaluate the overall effectiveness of the story.