

Town and Landscape

Town and country represent two poles that help define our experience of the world. What images of towns and landscapes do picture books communicate?

Town life is always in motion; it is marked by dynamism and speed, epitomized by public transport systems whose tramlines run through its streets. But it is also worthwhile to stop and pause, and to direct one's attention to the apparently insignificant: to quiet courtyards and to objects lying on the pavement. As becomes clear from the selected images, towns allow one to experience time differently. All things considered, towns confront us in a variety of guises: as idealized, stylized picture postcard motifs (*The Great New York Subway Map*); as anonymous, unsightly interiors (*Street Book: Writers Walk*); as adventure playground (*Beirut*); and as locales of isolation and disorientation (*Mazookas Panorama*).

Landscapes, on the other hand, are often surfaces onto which we project our own desires. What do picture books in which landscapes are the main protagonists intend with us? They can convey the ambience of southern summers (*Recueil n°1*) or the melancholy transience of time epitomized by the flowing of a river (*Fiume lento*). Or they incorporate surreal elements to reflect the anxieties of people seeking to find their place in the world (*Die Regeln des Sommers*).

Capturing a complex landscape in a single image requires condensation of the visible: certain characteristics are selected, and others left out of the picture. But it is precisely this type of abstraction that facilitates insights and creates memorable images that no verbal equivalent could ever achieve to the same degree. How, for instance, could one better capture the infinite expanse of the sea and the spatial unfolding of a coastal landscape than in a leporello (*Panorama de la côte*)? And how better capture the sensation of the moon rising over a broad desert landscape than through a painting (*Wüsten, Berge, Fjorde*)?