PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY
Whole Book Approach - Portrait or Landscape?

**Review:** Most picture books take on one of two formats. The choice of format influences the overall visual experience of the picture book.

**Objective:** This activity is designed to encourage critical thinking as to why one format might be chosen over another.

**Procedure:** Take a look at the picture books in your home, classroom, or library to see which books take which format. Choose one or two examples of each format to present to the group. Show the students the cover of the book and ask, “What do you see going on in this picture?” Spend a few minutes having students share their observations. After they’ve had a chance to carefully observe the cover and share their observations, introduce the idea that when a book is published the makers of the book need to decide whether it will look like this (show portrait book) or like this (show landscape book). Then have students spend a few minutes comparing the two forms. You can ask them what they see that is the same or different. Focusing on one book at a time, ask students why they think the makers of the book made the choices they made.

Following are comments made by students after looking at *Wings* by Christopher Myers:

*It’s a book about someone who flies so the pictures need to show how high he flies.*

*The story takes place in a city, so the pictures need to have room for skyscrapers.*

*The whole book looks like a city building because it is tall and narrow.*

Here are some comments about the format chosen for Eric Carle’s *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*:

*The caterpillar’s body is very long, so the book should be long from side to side too. A book about a giraffe would probably be a portrait format.*

*The food in the pictures inside of the book gets all laid out like a picnic, so the pictures need to be wide enough to show the whole spread of food.*

*The caterpillar goes through all of the foods so he needs room to go from one to the next. (In fact, many picture books about journeys take on a landscape format because it is well suited for showing movement across time and space in a visual narrative)*