

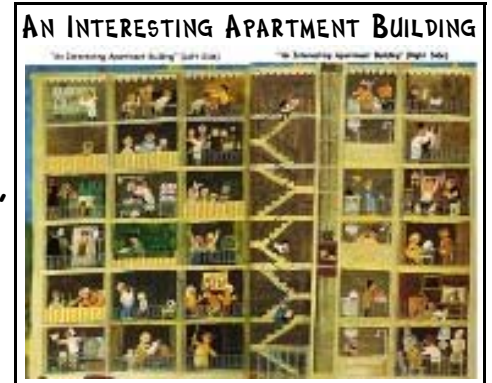
Busy Pictures in All-Skills Language Instruction:

Four Very Different Activities Based on One Cluttered Scene

(High Beginning through Intermediate Vocabulary, Grammar, Listening, Speaking, & Writing)

In language instruction, *cluttered scenes* with many things (going on) in them have uses that appeal to and take advantage of various learning styles: *visual* (seeing), *auditory* (hearing), *kinesthetic* (touching, holding, moving), and several others. In both practical and academic courses, “busy pictures” provide learners of various ability levels with both *oral and written skills practice*.

The attached two-page picture, taken from *Rundherum in meiner Stadt* (by Ali Mitgutsch, Otto Meier Verlag Ravensburg, 1968), is a typical example of an attractive, busy visual that might be enlarged, shown on a screen, and/or reproduced in smaller form for educational use. Among the many effective learning activities it suggests, here are suggested steps for four very *general* ones:



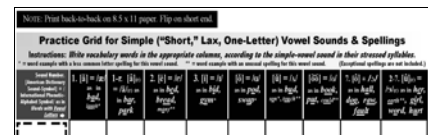
1. **INTRODUCTORY WHOLE-CLASS ALL-SKILLS INSTRUCTION:** Allow time for learners to view (a part of) the picture silently and try to “register” what they see. Encourage them to think about the visual *in English*; they might request input and/or jot down notes. To introduce useful sentence patterns and vocabulary orally, say relevant *true/false* statements or ask *yes/no* questions about the scene for participants to react to. Here are examples (with answers) based on “An Interesting Apartment Building.”

- *There are many separate apartments in this six-story building with ten flights of stairs. (True)*
- *Can you see that all the residents of the apartments own pets like dogs or cats? (No)*

Gradually, add *wh*-questions that invoke more structures and vocabulary, like these:

- *Where are (there) three young men playing music? (In the middle top apartment on the left.)*
- *What are the the guys on the balcony next next door doing at the present moment? (Fighting.)*

2. **VOCABULARY WITH PHONICS & SPELLING PRACTICE:** For targeted word-level instruction based on a *Cluttered Scene*, participants in groups can try filling out *Sound Vs. Letter Charts*—such as the *Practice Grids for Simple & Complex Vowel Sounds & Spellings* available/downloadable from the list of *Teaching Tools, Tips, & Techniques* offerings. To learn co-operatively, each group member in turn can call out an item for everyone to find in the busy picture. According to the vowel sound (in its stressed syllable), the second person can tell which *Vowel-Sound Column* the word belongs in. The third can spell it aloud; the fourth can print it in the appropriate list. Together, everyone checks their work. The same steps can be followed for *Charts with Initial or Final Consonant Sounds/Letters*. Of course, teachers/learners can also invent their own ways to use *Sound Vs. Letter Charts* with the offered sample or other cluttered visuals of this kind.



Here are just a few common words from the sample picture that might fit into these “Simple-Vowel” Columns: 1. /ă/ = *hat*, 1-r. /ā/ = *argue*, 2. /ē/ = *dentist*, 3. /ī/ = *drink*, 4. /ō/ = *dog*, 5. /ū/ = *up*, . . .

3. **SPEAKING/LISTENING/PARAPHRASING CHAIN:** Moving from one section of the picture to the next and pointing, have participants in turn use a *Chain* format to tell what they see—by naming items, making present, past, or future (continuous) statements, asking questions, or otherwise commenting. For example, they might say:

- *The man in the top left apartment is probably an architect. He's designing a house.*
- *How many musicians are there in the middle apartment? What instruments are they playing?*

Kinesthetic learners should be encouraged to point to or touch the things and activities they hear or talk about—and to show others. To reinforce both visual and auditory skills, the next participant can repeat (and/or improve, if possible) the previous person's words according to what *s/he* (thinks *s/he*) sees in the cluttered/busy scene. Analytical students can “edit” one another's' vocabulary or grammar and request or give correction. And for phonics, spelling, and writing practice through auditory stimuli, everyone can try copying down what (they think they hear) others say.

4. **COMPOSITION WRITING:** Here are some sample possible steps to follow to make optimal use of a busy, cluttered picture in *reading & writing instruction and practice*:

- **DICTION:** Focusing on one (probably the “first”) section of the busy scene, compose, print (on a board to be covered?), and/or duplicate a descriptive paragraph with typical sentence structures and vocabulary for the visual. At normal, natural speed, read the entire “composition intro” aloud while listeners follow along in the picture. Then, one at a time, read (parts of) each sentence aloud, allowing learners time to write what they hear; repeat several times. Finally, have writers “read back” the paragraph to the class, comparing their own work with the printed original.
- **CO-OPERATIVE COMPOSING:** Put learners into groups; with lines, divide the busy scene into equally-sized segments. With or without help, each participant writes a description of a different one of the parts of the whole picture. In turn, *s/he* reads his/her work aloud to the group and improves it. Finally, group members put their writing together in a unified, descriptive place/activity composition. They compare their creation with those of other groups.



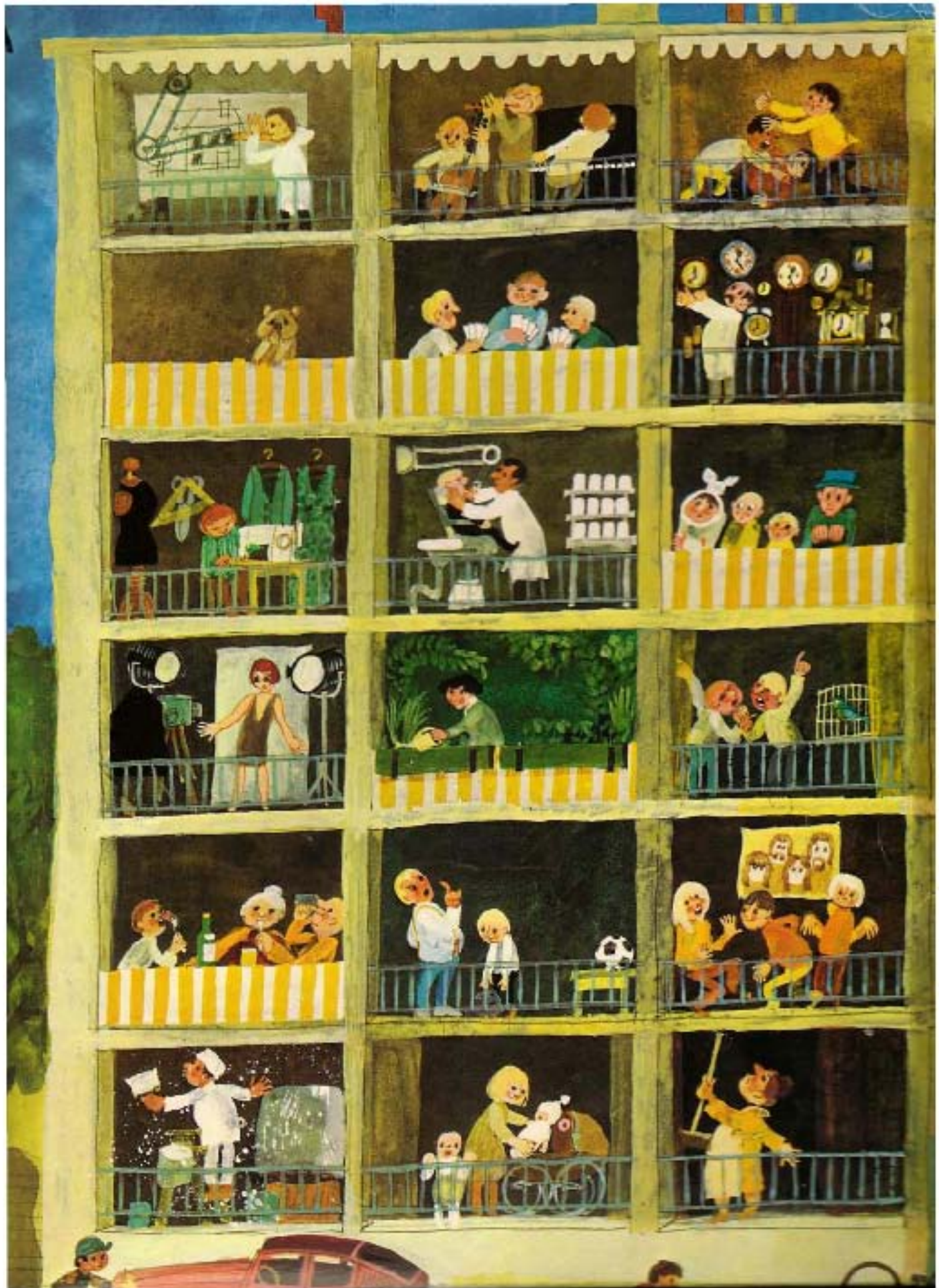
How to Obtain *Cluttered Scenes* for All-Skills Language Instruction

The colorful visuals on the next two pages were scanned in from the original “Wimmelbilderbuch” pictured here. They were PDF'd and JPEG'd. Like other obtainable, enlargeable visuals of this kind, they can viewed onscreen or projected onto a screen for educational purposes. If you decide to print them out for individual or small-group use, you may do so one- or two-sided, in full color or in black and white. If you prefer two-sided pages, you'll probably want to click on “flip on long edge.”



The simplest way to build your collection of busy pictures is to tear them out of your own large books or to get posters to use as is. You might also cut out, copy, enlarge, scan, mount and/or label the visuals. And of course, many pictures of this kind are offered online for creative, effective, educational use.

"An Interesting Apartment Building" (Left Side)



"An Interesting Apartment Building" (Right Side)

