What’s different about reading wordless (or nearly wordless) picture books?

Unlike typical picture book read-alouds, including wordless or nearly wordless books in storytimes depends heavily on the ability to read and interpret illustrations. There’s a give and take that happens. With few or no words for guidance, students must create meaning through careful observation, collaborative conversation, and thoughtful questioning.

In her book, Reading Picture Books with Children, Megan Dowd Lambert suggests reading with, rather than to children. Her Whole Book Approach, inspired by Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) employs a kind of “co-constructive storytime,” in which the adult reader guides a back-and-forth conversation with kids using the following open-ended questions as a starting point:

1. What’s going on in this picture?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can we find?

The lessons that follow aren’t meant to be an exact implementation of Visual Thinking Strategies or the Whole Book Approach, but a starting place. (You can learn more about the Whole Book Approach HERE.)