



2004

# Full Issue

Children's Book Review

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### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Review, Children's Book (2004) "Full Issue," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 25 : Iss. 5 , Article 29.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol25/iss5/29>

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Whitford, Rebecca. *Little Yoga: A toddler's first book of yoga*. Illustrated by Selway, Martina. Henry Holt, 2005. ISBN 0805078797. \$9.95. 28 pp.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Hatha yoga for children--Juvenile literature; Hatha yoga--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Little Yoga is a basic introduction to Hatha yoga for toddlers. The illustrations show toddlers doing basic poses that are described using animals - like stretching like a cat, hanging like a monkey, and crouching like a frog. The simple words and friendly pictures will help small children get the basic idea of the poses. Controlled breathing is too hard for small children, so Whitford recommends children make sounds as they breathe - for example, breathing out like a lion sounds like "haaaaaa." The back of the book has tips and advice for parents and caregivers who want to teach young children yoga. There is also a photographic index of the poses in the book and explanations for how each pose is performed. Simplicity and fun are emphasized in the illustrations and the advice section. This book is excellent for yoga beginners, young and old.

Rossum, Heleen Van. *Will You Carry Me?*. Illustrated by Harmelen, Peter Van. Kane/Miller, 2005. ISBN 1929132743. \$15.95. 26 pp.

Reviewer: Irene Halliday

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Humorous stories;

Subject: Mothers and sons--Juvenile fiction; Play--Juvenile fiction; Creative thinking--Juvenile fiction;

Toddler Thomas has had a busy, exciting morning playing in the park with other children, various exotic animals and insects, and especially with Mommy. Now it is time to go home, but Thomas is much too tired to walk. He wants to be carried by his equally-tired Mommy. Mommy doesn't complain; instead, she smiles as she comes up with wonderfully creative ways to get Thomas happily back home without carrying him as well as her backpack. Jumping, swimming, flying and running along city streets naturally attract the attention of other children, inviting their participation. Even the pets and other park critters join the homeward game.

Both author and illustrator turn an ordinary event into something extraordinary in this delightful picture book, first published in 2004 in Amsterdam, Netherlands. The sky is sometimes yellow, sometimes pink, sometimes purple, as are the trees and bushes, European-style buildings and park furnishings. Real and stuffed animals mingle freely with a tiny mermaid and elf, as all of them join in the fun concocted by a creative Mommy. The detailed illustrations and joyful text work together to create a magical journey home. The story will surprise and delight toddlers and pre-schoolers and may give other tired Mommies some fresh ideas.

Weeks, Sarah. *Baa-Choo!* Illustrated by Jane K. Manning. HarperCollins, 2004.  
ISBN 0060292369. \$16.89. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Pat Frade

Reading Level: Preschool

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Humorous stories;

Subject: Sneezing--Juvenile fiction; Sheep--Juvenile fiction;

Sam the lamb has a cold, and he needs to sneeze. All the barnyard animals pitch in to help Sam the lamb sneeze. Together they tickle, sprinkle, and kick dust for a great big sneeze. This "I Can Read" book's rhyming words and colorful pictures tell a lively story which illustrates friends helping friends. However, some of the words are more advanced than beginning readers may understand and some of the design elements may confuse readers because there are some pages where the text is not together in a text block.

DiPucchio, Kelly S. *What's the Magic Word?*. Illustrated by Marsha Winborn. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0060005785. \$15.99. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction;

Subject: Birds--Juvenile fiction; Domestic animals--Juvenile fiction; Animals--Juvenile fiction; Winds--Juvenile fiction; Stories in rhyme--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

In a nest on the branch of a pink-blossomed farmyard tree, a newly hatched bird is "whooshed" into the sky in a brisk wind. He lands "kerplunk" by a farm animal and asks, "Hello? Hello? Can I come in?" The cow, the bees, the dog, the owl, and the pig all query in return, "What's the magic word, Little Bird?" Little bird learns each animal's sound and then is "whoosed" away again. Finally, the blustery wind whisks little bird back to the safety of his mother's nest and learns from his mother that "please" is the magic word.

This cute spring story by DiPucchio has a simple text based in repetitious rhyming and is accompanied by Winborn's soft, but bright and detailed watercolor illustrations. Winborn is able to capture the little bird's expressions as he flies through the air, lands unexpectedly, and asks the animals his question with hopeful expectation. The end of each phrase's rhyming text is after the page turn, and kids are anxious to guess the rhyming word before the page is turned. *What's the Magic Word?* is a very nice read-aloud experience.

Lester, Helen. *Hurty Feelings*. Illustrated by Lynn Munsinger. Houghton Mifflin, 2004. ISBN 0618410821. \$16.00. 32 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction; Humorous stories;

Subject: Hippopotamus--Juvenile fiction; Elephants--Juvenile fiction; Emotions--Juvenile fiction; Behavior--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

Fragility is a hippopotamus who "is a solid piece of work." Despite her outer appearance of strength, Fragility is hypersensitive and insecure. Her friends' compliments are kind and sincere but she always takes offense and breaks down into fits of wailing. The other hippos start to avoid Fragility for fear of saying something that will hurt her feelings. Fragility's constant indulgence in self-pity leaves her "a big solid piece of – loneliness." When Rudy the Elephant, a very rude bully, starts to hurl real insults at Fragility she stands up to him. In the process, both Rudy and Fragility learn to be a little more perceptive and gracious.

This is a clever and fast-paced story about handling emotions, although the way Fragility twists her friends' compliments can seem a little far-fetched at times. Munsinger's humorous and expressive watercolor illustrations are the book's strength and selling point. She does a wonderful job of capturing Fragility's sensitive personality. This is a great book to read-aloud.

Knox, Barbara J. and Stephen F. Brown. *Castle Dracula: Romania's Vampire Home*. Bearport Publishing Company, Inc., 2005. ISBN 1597160008. \$22.60. 32 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Castles--Romania--Bran (Brasov) --Juvenile literature; Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia, 1430 or 31-1476 or 7 --Juvenile literature; Dracula, Count (Fictitious character) --Juvenile literature;

Knox successfully weaves together vampire legend and historical fact in this brief history of Bran Castle. Because author Bram Stoker fashioned his character Count Dracula's castle after this landmark it is sometimes referred to as Dracula's Castle. The castle sits on a 200-foot tall rock overlooking the village of Brasov in the region of Romania known as Transylvania. Built during the Middle Ages, it was home to the infamous ruler Prince Vlad of Wallachia, also called Vlad the Impaler for his preferred method of execution. Vlad is also known as "Dracula," or "son of the dragon." The castle is full of hidden tunnels and stairways, and secret rooms. In the 1920's it became home to Romania's royal family. In 1956, the castle was returned to the people of Brasov who turned it into a museum that is now open to the public.

Knox's book is part of Bearport Publishing's series, "Castles, Palaces & Tombs." Like the other books in this series, the text is minimal but informative and illustrations are plentiful and well-done. Each double-page spread includes one interesting bit of trivia that is set off from the rest of the narrative. The "Just the Facts" section of the text includes information on vampire legends, Vlad the Impaler, and Brasov, Romania. Knox also includes a glossary and a timeline of events. Readers who would like to learn more about Bran Castle, vampires or Prince Vlad will find a bibliography and list of websites at the end of the book. In an interesting note at the end of the text, the publisher writes that Knox and her daughter are avid fans of vampire stories and that both would like to go "vampire camping" in Romania.

Trumbauer, Lisa. *King Ludwig's Castle: Germany's Neuschwanstein*. Bearport, 2005. ISBN 1597160024. \$22.60. 32 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Ludwig II, King of Bavaria, 1845-1886--Palaces--Germany--Bavaria--Juvenile literature; Schloss Neuschwanstein (Germany)--Juvenile literature; Castles--Juvenile literature; Germany--Juvenile literature; Book--Reviews;

Germany's Neuschwanstein Castle is probably best known as the model for Disneyland's Sleeping Beauty Castle. In reality it was meant to be the dream castle for King Ludwig II of Bavaria. As a boy, Ludwig was fascinated by stories of ancient kingdoms, castles, and brave knights. He was especially intrigued by the story of Lohengrin, a swan that turned into a German prince. When he became King of Bavaria at the age of eighteen, he began work on a palace that was to be larger than his family's summer home of Hohenschwangau. The building of Neuschwanstein became such an obsession for Ludwig that he spent all of his money on its construction and asked other countries to help fund the project. Unfortunately, Ludwig lost his kingdom in 1871, was declared mad by the German government in 1886, and was locked up in Berg Castle where he died two days after his arrest. He never had the opportunity to live in his dream castle.

Trumbauer has visited Neuschwanstein several times and writes as one well-acquainted with the castle and its history. Currently, fifteen of the opulent rooms are open to visitors. The text is minimal but informative with crisply reproduced color photographs and art work for illustrations. Particularly intriguing are photographs showing swan-shaped faucets in the bathrooms and a room designed to look like a cave. The book follows the format of others in the Castle, Palace & Tomb series with a "Just the Facts" section, glossary, and timeline of events at the end of the text. A bibliography and list of useful websites are also included. However, what really stands out is the way Trumbauer has captured the life of a monarch obsessed with castle building.

Kimmel, Eric A.. *Cactus Soup*. Illustrated by Phil Huling. Marshall Cavendish, 2004. ISBN 0761451552. \$16.95. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Folklore; Historical Fiction;

Subject: Folklore--France--Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews;

A troop of soldiers is descending on the little town of San Miguel, and the townspeople, to preserve their food supplies from the hungry men, hide all their food and dress themselves like poor beggars. Just as they suspected, the soldiers' first request was for food. After the mayor explains they are too poor to feed them, the captain of the soldiers announces, "It looks like we're going to have to make cactus soup." Although the soldiers protest, they soon begin the process by boiling a kettle of water in the middle of the town plaza, and begin by adding the first ingredient, a huge cactus thorn! Intrigued, the townspeople gather closer, and soon they offer additional ingredients so that the cactus soup will taste better. Soon salt, chiles, onions, garlic, a variety of vegetables, and fat stewing hens are simmering in the pot. It is the most delicious soup anyone has ever tasted, "and to think it was made from a cactus thorn!" After their feasting, everyone has a fiesta!

Although similar to *Stone Soup*, this story is uniquely set in the time of the Mexican Revolution. Children will enjoy the repetitive sentence, "Why ask for what you don't have?" Huling's detailed bright watercolor illustrations emphasize the expressive Mexican culture. As the townspeople and the soldiers rejoice, the readers also rejoice in the moral of the story - instead of being stingy and dishonest, it's best to share what you have with those who have less. The glossary at the end of the book is helpful, but it lacks a pronunciation guide.

Barron, T. A.. *High as a Hawk*. Illustrated by Ted Lewin. Philomel Books, 2004. ISBN 0399237046. \$16.99. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Historical Fiction;

Subject: Longs Peak (Colo.)--Juvenile fiction; Mountaineering--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Harriett and her father are set to climb Long's Peak in Colorado aided by Mr. Enos Mills, a famous mountain guide. Climbing this 14,255 foot mountain had been Harriett's mother's dream, and they had planned to have her accompany them, but, as Harriett explained, "She just didn't tell me she was going to die first." After Harriett's father finds the thin air too much for him, Harriett and Mr. Mills encounter the peak's surprises together: steep trails, a thundering elk herd, fantastic views, mountain streams, howling winds, blisters, rock slides, and a snowstorm. Finally, just as Harriett was ready to give up, they reach the snowy summit. Here, after Harriett sees a hawk fly by, she feels, "As High as a Hawk."

Although Barron explains at the end of the book that he made up the details of Harriett's life and the reason behind her climb, Harriett Peter's is a real eight year-old, from Little Rock, Arkansas. Harriett climbed Long's Peak with Enos Mills in 1905. Except for one word of profanity, this was a very enjoyable read-aloud experience. A sweet triumphant feeling comes over the reader as Harriett finally reaches the summit. The story would not have the total effect that it does without the realistic watercolor illustrations by Lewin. Close-ups of Harriett's determined face, Mr. Mills' and Harriett's anxiety as they see the challenges ahead, and Harriett's stance with outstretched arms at the summit are just a few of the emotion-filled illustrations which lead the reader through this amazingly triumphant climb.

Tagliaferro, Linda. *Taj Mahal: India's Majestic Tomb*. Bearport, 2005. ISBN 1597160040.  
\$22.60. 32 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Taj Mahal (Agra, India)--Juvenile Literature; India--Juvenile literature; Book--Reviews;

Taj Mahal means "Crown Palace" and is the tomb of Mumtaz Mahal, the second and favorite wife of the Mogul ruler, Shah Jahan. Built in Agra, India by a team of thirty-seven architects from India, Persia, and other countries, it is constructed of white marble and decorated with jewels in its walls. Since the Mogul rulers were Muslim, religion influenced the architecture; for example, quotations from the Koran can be found on the inside walls. Shah Jahan used the gardens as a place to sit and honor his late wife's memory. In later years, the British rulers in India took a much different view of the Taj Mahal, holding large parties on the marble terrace and stealing jewels from the walls. One Governor of India, Lord Bentinck, even wanted to destroy the Taj Mahal so he could take the marble to England and sell it. In the 1900's, Lord Curzon, a great admirer of Indian art, helped restore the Taj Mahal to its former glory. Today this monument is open to the public.

Tagliaferro is an award-winning author; and, this is her seventeenth book for children. Her handling of Shah Jahan's love for Mumtaz Mahal is sweet. The minimal but informative text is complemented by crisp color photographs and reproductions of artwork. A "Just the Facts" section, glossary, timeline, and bibliography, with a list of some useful websites, are included at the end of the book. This is another book in the Castles, Palaces & Tombs series.

Ball, Jacqueline A. and Stephen F. Brown. *Windsor Castle: England's Royal Fortress*. Bearport Publishing Company, Inc., 2005. ISBN 1597160059. \$22.60. 32 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Castles--Windsor Castle--Juvenile literature; Windsor Castle--History--Juvenile Literature;

In 1897, castle guard Carr Glynn encountered the ghost of a woman in the library at Windsor Castle. He followed the woman but she disappeared. She looked familiar to Glynn who later realized that he had seen the ghost of Queen Elizabeth I, who died 300 years earlier. With this brief anecdote, Ball captures her readers' attention. In her succeeding narrative, she highlights important events in the history of Windsor Castle, considered by some to be England's most haunted castle. She covers the time period from 1070, the date historians believe construction on the castle began, to the 1992 fire that damaged the northwest side of the building to the celebration of Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee there in 2002. Windsor Castle was originally built as a fortress by William the Conqueror and later became one of Queen Elizabeth II's favorite homes.

Each double-page spread contains minimal, but informative text, several illustrations, and one interesting bit of trivia that is set off from the rest of the narrative. The illustrations are plentiful and are either clear, crisp color photographs or reproductions of artwork. Readers who are eager to learn more will find a bibliography and a list of related websites at the end of the text. Ball also includes a glossary, a timeline of events in the castle's history and one page entitled, "Just the Facts." This is the kind of book that makes readers want to travel. *Windsor Castle: England's Royal Fortress* is one of six books in Bearport Publishing's "Castles, Palaces & Tombs" series.

Wheeler, Jill C. *Garth Williams*. Abdo Publishing Company, 2004. ISBN 1591977231. \$21.35. 24 pp.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Biographies;

Subject: Illustrators--United States--Biography--Juvenile literature; Williams, Garth--Juvenile literature; Book--Reviews;

Williams is the illustrator for the Little House books, *Charlotte's Web*, *Stuart Little*, and other well known children's books. During World War II he worked on an ambulance crew for the British Red Cross during the bombing raids of London, England.

The Children's Authors series gives the primary reader clear examples of the basic contents of an informational book: table of contents, concisely informative, heavily illustrated, clearly written chapters, and index. New words are bolded in the text and listed in a glossary at the back of the book. Each book includes interesting aspects of the author's childhood, education, and career. In addition, the Children's Authors series books give a list of Web Sites where, through the publisher, readers can find more information about that particular children's author and the books they have written. Four other authors in the series are *A. A. Milne* (2005), *Robert McCloskey* (2005), and *Gertrude Chandler Warner* (2005). My oldest granddaughter, who is in 3rd grade, read and enjoyed all four books!

Wheeler, Jill C. *Robert McCloskey*. Abdo Publishing Company, 2005. ISBN 1591977193.  
\$21.35. 24 pp.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Biographies;

Subject: Illustrators--United States--Biography--Juvenile literature; McCloskey, Robert 1914--  
Juvenile literature; Book--Reviews;

McCloskey is an author and illustrator. He was also a talented musician. It is interesting to read the experiences which led him to create many of his famous books, including *Lentil*, *Make Way for Ducklings*, and *Blueberries for Sal*.

The Children's Authors series gives the primary reader clear examples of the basic contents of an informational book: table of contents, concisely informative, heavily illustrated, clearly written chapters, and index. New words are bolded in the text and listed in a glossary at the back of the book. Each book includes interesting aspects of the author's childhood, education, and career. In addition, the Children's Authors series books give a list of Web Sites where, through the publisher, readers can find more information about that particular children's author and the books they have written. Four other authors in the series are *Garth Williams* (2004), *A. A. Milne* (2005), and *Gertrude Chandler Warner* (2005). My oldest granddaughter, who is in 3rd grade, read and enjoyed all four books!

Murphy, Stuart J.. *It's about time!*. Illustrated by John Speirs. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0060557680. \$15.99. 31 pp.

Reviewer: Pat Frade

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Shortcomings

Genre: Picture books;

Subject: Time--Juvenile fiction; Books--reviews;

This is a very simple picture book about time. It teaches about keeping time by relating the hours of the day to a little boy's activities: waking up, meals, going to school, going home, story time, nap time, play time, bath time, going to bed, etc. It begins and ends the same way, with 7:00 a.m. "wake-up time--a great big stretch". Each hour in this book is given a page which demonstrates not only how that hour is spent but both a digital and conventional (analog) representations of the time. The illustrations are colorful and sweet. The "day-time" hours are on crisp white pages, while the "night-time" hours are shaded to illustrate night. The text is very simple although somewhat unimaginative. The text uses punctuation which may be confusing to young readers, alternating commas and dashes. The "sleep" hours are confusing as they are spent dreaming with some friendly monsters that dance and caper about. But the little boy's eyes are open as he is interacting with the monsters, so it leaves the reader to wonder if the little boy is playing all night or dreaming. The little boy goes to school half-day which illustrates that the book is geared to kindergarten age children or a level 1 reader. However, children that young may not understand the concept of time, as it relates to its representations on a clock. It would be easier for older readers to understand the complex nature of time.

Celenza, Anna Harwell. *Bach's Goldberg Variations*. Illustrated by JoAnn E. Kitchel. Charlesbridge, 2005. ISBN 1570915105. \$19.95. 32 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction; Historical fiction;

Subject: Bach, Johann Sebastian, 1685-1750--Juvenile fiction; Goldberg, Johann Gottlieb, 1727-1756--Juvenile fiction; Goldberg Variations--Juvenile fiction; Music--Juvenile fictions;

Musicians--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

Celenza's book is a fictional account of how Bach's monumental piece, *The Goldberg Variations*, got its name. In the autumn of 1737, Bach invites Count Keyserlingk, a Russian ambassador living in Dresden, to hear a young orphan named Johann Gottlieb Goldberg play the organ. Keyserlingk is so taken with Goldberg's talent that he offers to take him in. Given a position as a servant in the Count's household, Goldberg also receives music lessons from Bach, but is forced to practice at night. One night the Count, who is unable to sleep, discovers Goldberg practicing the harpsichord. Impressed by the boy's talent, he orders him to learn a new piece each week. When the Count tells Goldberg to learn a piece that incorporates all of the musical styles he has learned so far, the boy turns to his mentor, Bach, for help.

Celenza has a Ph.D. in musicology and has written several books on music for children. What is appealing about this text is how clearly and concisely she explains the development of *The Goldberg Variations*. In an author's note, Celenza explains that the main characters in her story did exist, and offers more information on the history of *The Goldberg Variations*. Kitchel's vibrant ink and watercolor illustrations are cartoon-like in style. A CD of *The Goldberg Variations*, as performed by pianist John Kamitsuka, is included.

Wood, Douglas. *Old Turtle and the Broken Truth*. Illustrated by Jon J. Muth. Scholastic, 2003. ISBN 0439321093. \$17.95. 64 pp.

Reviewer: Emily E. Johnson

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Picture books;

Subject: Toleration--Juvenile fiction; Truth--Juvenile fiction; Nature--Effect of human beings on --Juvenile fiction;

One man found the broken truth. He clung to it; it made him feel good so he shared it with people like himself. Soon other people wanted the truth. Wars began to spread. Among the battles over the Truth one Little Girl emerged. She traveled through the Mountains of Imagining, the River of Wondering Why, and the Forest of Finding Out until she found Old Turtle. Old Turtle told her how the broken truth was found and the need to find the additional portion of it. Together the two wandered and spoke to one another and Old Turtle guided the Little Girl to the other part of the Truth. The Little Girl carried the gift of Truth coupled with Old Turtle's wisdom back to her own people. There she tried to explain but no one could comprehend her words. Then, the Truths were brought together to say, "You are loved / and so are they;" and the people began to comprehend.

Wood's use of animals is reminiscent of Native American traditions and his poetic expression creates a steady flow of words on each page. The placement gives an added dimension to the story, guiding the reader's eyes and showing how the story should sound. This peaceful flow is likewise depicted in Muth's watercolor illustrations. Each element contributes to the story's message and while simple words and sentences weave this story, the meaning is much deeper. A perfect book for those learning English as a second language.

Skye, Obert. *Leven Thumps and the Gateway to Foo*. Shadow Mountain, 2005. ISBN 1590383699. \$17.95. 348 pp.

Reviewer: Jessica Farmer

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Magic--Juvenile fiction; Dreams--Juvenile fiction;

Leven Thumps has not had an easy life. Orphaned as an infant, he lives with his wretched Aunt and Uncle who don't care for him at all. One night, as he is lying on a cot on the front porch which serves as his bed, he sees a dark shadow lurking just beyond the light. He doesn't know what it is, but he knows it is evil and with this realization, his life changes forever. Soon, Leven discovers that he is the only one who can prevent our world and the land of Foo, the place where all dreams are created, from merging into one. If Leven cannot close the gateway between the two worlds forever, the evil Sabine will force them to collide and destroy all dreams and hope. Leven is joined by Clover, a small furry creature who is his guide and constant companion and a powerful girl from Foo named Winter. Together with a talking toothpick, they journey across the Atantic Ocean to Germany where the gateway can be found.

This story is full of fantasy and whimsy. The characters are likable, even though sometimes unbelievable. The story begins slowly and the characters don't actually start on their journey until halfway through the book. With that said the quirky characters make the long ride fun and entertaining. Leven is the kind of boy whom most kids can relate to. He is talented and strong but very unsure of himself and what he needs to do. At its core, this is a story about the importance of hope and imagination in a child's mind and how too often, these crucial aspects of childhood are lost. Overall, this book would be great for kids who like fantasy or who need a little imagination pick-me-up.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. *Going Going*. Greenwillow, 2005. ISBN 0688161855. \$15.99. 232 pp.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Political activists--Juvenile fiction; Small business--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Florrie is a sixteen year old, anti-franchise activist who commits to boycott all franchises in favor of supporting local businesses for sixteen weeks. She tries to persuade her restaurateur family and her friends to participate, as well as a mysterious and attractive boy named Ramsey. Soon Florrie's activism gains media attention, and the threat of chain stores on local businesses hits closer to home than anyone expects.

Nye is a poet, first and foremost, and it shows through her lyrical text. Although not written in poetry, the text is full of dreamlike scenes and vivid descriptions of the novel's setting in downtown San Antonio, Texas. The theme speaks about loss of familiar and loved places, loved ones, and community identity. *Going, Going* is not a "doom and gloom" book, but regret echoes in the descriptions. Florrie's romance blends with the story well but is not the focal point. A thoughtful book with purpose and conviction in it – a welcome read that stands above superficial young adult literature.

Sachs, Marilyn. *Lost in America*. Roaring Brook Press, 2005. ISBN 1596430400. \$16.95. 150 pp.

Reviewer: Pat Frade

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Historical Fiction;

Subject: Immigrants--Juvenile fiction; Jews-United States--Juvenile fiction; Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)-France--Juvenile fiction; Books--reviews;

The story begins in 1943 in France. Fourteen-year-old Nicole decides to spend the night at her friend, Francoise's house before Francoise's family leaves for Switzerland. The next day Nicole arrives home to an empty house and is told by neighbors that the Gestapo came during the night and are looking for her. She hides in her school and a teacher helps her until the war is over. A concentration camp survivor finds Nicole and informs her that her parents and little sister died in Auschwitz. The only extended family she has is in the Bronx, so at 17 she travels to New York to be with them. Unwelcome by her extended family, Nicole finds this new environment difficult. She must work even though she is unskilled. Nicole finds comfort with Francoise and her family who have also immigrated to New York. Nicole struggles to be a "real American girl", while being haunted by memories of her family. The history represented in the story is authentic. This book gives a realistic look at what life may have been like for Holocaust survivors who came to America looking for a safer life. It reveals that many Americans felt untouched by the war and didn't want to know about it. Readers will learn from this book, which is based on the life of one of the author's friends.

Taylor, Theodore. *Ice Drift*. Harcourt, 2005. ISBN 0152050817. \$16.00. 224 pp.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Adventure stories; Historical fiction;

Subject: Inuit--Juvenile Fiction; Arctic regions--Juvenile Fiction; Survival skills--Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews;

In 1868, two Inuit boys are hunting seal on an ice floe attached to the Arctic island where they live when the floe is detached from the land by a drifting iceberg. Alika and his younger brother Sulu must learn to survive blizzards, polar bears, hunger, and the gradual dissolution of the ice on which they live as the floe drifts southward through the Arctic night.

*Ice Drift* as a whole is better than the sum of its parts. The book is so packed with Arctic lore that the storyline is sometimes buried, some transitional elements are almost nonexistent in their abruptness, and some aspects of the boys' lives on the ice floe simply don't make sense (why would seals come up through holes in the ice to breathe when the boys are so near to the open water at the edge of the floe?). However, the whole story is so atmospheric, so cold, so filled with the dangers of Inuit life that it stays in the mind long after one finishes the book. Taylor expertly shifts back and forth from the boys in peril to their parents' anxiety and futile attempts to save them, and one comes to care very much for all the characters in this gripping account.

Cox, Sarah Mayor and Robert Ingpen. *Pictures Telling Stories: The Art of Robert Ingpen*.  
Illustrated by Robert Ingpen. Penguin Young Readers Group, 2005. ISBN 0698400119.  
\$35.00. 112 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Ingpen, Robert--Juvenile literature; Illustrators--Juvenile literature; Illustration--  
Juvenile literature;

Australian artist Ingpen has illustrated over 100 books in his 30-year career. *Pictures Telling Stories* is a coffee table-size book that highlights some of Ingpen's finest paintings and book illustrations. The main intention of the book is to explore how pictures act as a narrative and how they bring literature to life. Most of the text consists of interesting, substantial and informative captions, but it also includes quotes from the artist himself which reveal the thought-processes behind his work. The reproductions of his paintings are outstanding and the illustrations include brainstorming ideas and rough sketches as well as finished artwork. Many of the paintings cover a double-page spread. The variety of artwork showcased gives readers an idea of what is involved in book illustration. Ingpen received the Hans Christian Andersen Medal, the highest honor in the area of children's books, in 1986. This book will be most beneficial for teachers trying to encourage students to consider illustration as a first option career and not just something to "fall back on."

Lyon, George Ella. *Sonny's House of Spies*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2004. ISBN 0689851685. \$16.95. 298 pp.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Fiction;

Subject: Family problems--Juvenile fiction; Homosexuality--Juvenile fiction; Coming of age--Juvenile fiction; Single-parent families--Juvenile fiction; Race relations--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

When Sonny was little he idealized his father. When his father left, he and his mom kept hoping that his father would come back some day. But he didn't. As time goes on, Sonny and his mother make new friends and become involved with a new church. Sonny begins working in a doughnut shop owned by one of their new friends, who is a leader in their new church, and is surprised to find a letter from his dad at the shop. The letter sends him on a painful search for his lost father, for his own place in the world, and in his family.

Lyon's writing is compelling; his characters are drawn with deep hues. The setting and the interpersonal relationships are carefully depicted and believable. Unfortunately, like many Young Adult writers, he seems to try to fit as many social issues as possible into the book. He deals with single parenthood, abusive family members, trauma of dismemberment (one character loses a leg), racial issues, homosexuality, and suicide. As one issue is heaped on top of the other, all the reader can do is wonder, "What is going to happen to this poor child next?" The book does not promote homosexuality, and the two homosexuals are not admirable characters (one leaves his family and the other apparently commits suicide). The main character finds peace and resolution when he discovers that he is not homosexual like his father and acquires a girlfriend. This book might appeal to the kind of teen who enjoys wallowing in other's problems. However, most readers will find the social issues too thick to wade through.

Nelson, Marilyn. *A Wreath for Emmett Till*. Illustrated by Philippe Lardy. Houghton Mifflin, 2005. ISBN 0618397523. \$17.00. 48 pp.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Historical poetry;

Subject: Till, Emmett, 1941-1955--Juvenile poetry; African Americans--Crimes against--Juvenile poetry; Hate crimes--Juvenile poetry;

With breath-catching verse, Nelson offers a memorial to the fourteen-year-old African American boy, Emmett Till, who was beaten, shot, lynched, and thrown into a river in rural Mississippi by five white men. His offense was supposedly whistling at a white woman. The year was 1955.

Nelson employs a rare poetic form, a heroic crown of fifteen sonnets in which the last line of one poem becomes the first line of the next and the last poem is the first line of the previous fourteen poems. The heroic crown creates piercing and haunting images of a horrific hate crime and of a childhood cut short. The wreath of poems is woven with elements of nature and alludes to literary and historical events. Illustrations reflect both the natural elements and the horror of the text. Lardy used three color palettes: reds for the crime, browns for the mourning, and yellows and oranges for hope, interspersing a calming green. Both poem and illustrations are filled with symbolism and allusions, and both poet and illustrator provide notes to extend the learning experience for the reader. The poetry is exquisite, and the book provides impetus for sober discussions. References include the PBS website that is the companion to its film, *The Murder of Emmett Till*, YA author Crowe's *Getting Away with Murder* (Dial, 2003), and Till-Mobley and Benson's *Death of Innocence* (Random House, 2003). Viewing or reading any of these sources prior to reading the poetry will greatly increase the young adult's ability to understand and to absorb this dreadful event. Although the picture book format may suggest that this book is for young children, the poetry is definitely for young adults and adults.

Rowling, J.K.. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. Illustrated by Mary GrandPre. Scholastic, 2005. ISBN 0439784549. \$29.99. 652 pp.

Reviewer: Jessica Farmer

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Wizards--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Schools--Juvenile fiction;

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince definitely lives up to the hype and excitement that have preceded it for months. Harry's journey continues in the newest installment of the series with more of the elements that we have always loved in Rowling's writing; suspense, comedy, mystery, fantasy, tenderness, and even a little romance. Harry is once more thrown into his enchanted life at Hogwarts, but this time with the oppressive knowledge of his role in the eventual defeat of Voldemort looming constantly over his head. Life seems to go on as normal, however, as he attends classes, plays Quidditch (now as the team captain), and enjoys many misadventures with best buds Ron and Hermione. His classes have gotten harder this year as he has additional private lessons with Dumbledore, prepares for the Apparition Test and N.E.W.T exams. Harry counts himself lucky when he comes across an old Potions textbook with very helpful notes from a former student known only as the Half-Blood Prince. With the help of the book, he quickly becomes the best in his potions class (no longer taught by Professor Snape, who has finally gotten his dream job as the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher). The rise of Voldemort to power has not gone unnoticed inside Hogwarts, and Harry is on constant alert as strange things start happening in the school. Draco Malfoy has been disappearing inside the Room of Requirement for long periods of time, and two students have been attacked by Dark objects that have been snuck into the school. Meanwhile, in his lessons with Dumbledore, Harry is studying the life of Voldemort. By way of the Pensieve, he explores the memories of those who saw Voldemort grow up and come to power. Through this exploration, Dumbledore hopes to show Harry Voldemort's motivations and discover his weaknesses. Everything comes to a head at the end of the school year as the Death Eaters invade the school for a battle against the Order of the Phoenix resulting in the death of a dear friend, and Harry finally discovers how to defeat Voldemort once and for all.

The newest installment of the much loved Harry Potter series brings readers one step closer to discovering the full mystery surrounding "the Boy Who Lived." Rowling once again provides us with a page-turner and then leaves us counting down the days until the next book is published. Harry has matured but is still the fun loving adventurous kid that young and old can relate to, only with a more serious side as he takes his place as "the Chosen One." This book is significantly darker and might be a bit too intense for a younger audience. The writing at times seemed to be a bit scattered and somewhat hard to follow but the intrigue of the plot keeps readers moving and ready for more. Overall, this exciting book brings out a wide range of emotions in its readers including fear, hope, happiness, excitement and sadness. Most of all, the reader is left with a profound sense of anticipation for the 7th and final book in the Harry Potter series and to finally found out how the story will end.

Taylor, G. P.. *Shadowmancer*. Putnam's, 2004. ISBN 0399242562. \$16.99. 304 pp.

Reviewer: Betsy Spackman

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fiction; Occult fiction; Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Magic--Juvenile fiction; England--Juvenile fiction; Fantasy--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

A fantasy set in the Middle Ages, *Shadowmancer* tells the story of Thomas and Kate, who join forces with a new friend from a faraway land, Raphah, to fight the evil vicar Obadiah Demurral. Demurral stole the Keruvim, a powerful, ancient golden relic that would allow him to control the world, including God and the forces of good. Raphah came from Africa by ship to England to recover the Keruvim. With many close calls and twists of plot, Thomas, Kate, and Raphah meet both friends and enemies on their quest to stop Demurral. The action is set in a religious world which includes the god Riathamus, the devil Pyratheon, and their corresponding spirit servants.

This compelling story is rife with Christian symbolism, which is both a strength and a weakness. The dialogue and descriptions include many phrases from the Bible, and the plot includes the following specific biblical parallels: Thomas dreams of a king worshipped by seraphim who asks Thomas to serve him; Raphah casts out a devil in the name of Riathamus; and Riathamus, disguised as a shepherd, offers fish and bread to the two friends. Readers from a Christian tradition might enjoy the parallels or find the occult aspects of the story offensive, although others might find the obvious religiosity of the story officious. Readers of all religious persuasions will be drawn in by the fast-paced adventure, the interesting characters, and the unusual approach to the battle between good and evil.

Walker, Richard. *Microscopic Life*. Kingfisher, 2004. ISBN 0753457784. \$11.95. 63 pp.

Reviewer: Betsy Spackman

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Microbiology--Juvenile literature;

A new addition to the Kingfisher Knowledge series, *Microscopic Life*, introduces readers to organisms in the microscopic world. The first chapter explains how microscopes are used to examine tiny organisms and discusses with the concepts of scale and magnification. In the second chapter, readers learn about different types of organisms, including viruses, bacteria, protists, fungi, and mini animals. The third and last chapter discusses the value of microbes and the role they play in the living world. Several pages are devoted to the negative effects of microbes but most of the book emphasizes the beneficial aspects of microscopic organisms.

This book's great strength is its eye-catching photographs and illustrations. Most images, several of which appear on each page, are actual micrographs of organisms, magnified and artificially colored to show the details of the organism. Captions include the type of micrograph and the magnification of the organisms. Other images are computer-generated illustrations or artists' interpretations of organisms or related topics. Abbreviations are used in the captions before they are explained in the text, which might confuse attentive readers. The text is clearly written and well organized, with subheadings on each page. It is disappointing that the author described viruses as nonliving, because scientists still debate whether viruses are indeed alive. Despite these small faults, this book is an excellent resource for older students interested in the microscopic world.

Atkins, Catherine. *Alt Ed*. G. P. Putnam's Sons/Penguin Books for Young Readers, 2003. ISBN 0399238549. \$17.99. 198 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Meyers

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Behavior disorders in teenagers--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; High schools--Juvenile fiction; Overweight persons--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

Susan Callaway goes through high school trying not to be noticed; she wears baggy sweatpants and turtlenecks and keeps her head down. The real problem is her weight-at her size, it makes her hard to go unseen, and she's sick of the teasing. Finally, she participates in an act of vandalism in retaliation against the worst of her tormentors and finds herself in a Vocational Education class, which is made up of six students whose actions could have gotten them kicked out of school. Mr. Duffy, the guidance counselor, is giving them all one last chance, but Susan isn't sure she wants that chance, especially when she finds out that the bane of her existence, Kale Krasner, is in the class with her.

*Alt Ed* is a surprisingly sensitive look at the painful issue of teenage ostracism. The main character, Susan Callaway, struggles with feelings of social and familial abandonment, sentiments which may be devastatingly familiar for many teens. While the ending feels a little pat, (general comeuppance and forgiveness for all), there is still some realistic resistance to clemency from the two characters who have been most trodden upon. This book will be especially moving for those teens who have braved indifference and bigotry to carve a niche for themselves.

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## Reading Media Literature with Young People

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My twelve-year-old sister Elisabeth is an accomplished, Suzuki-trained violinist. She likes to play a game in which her audience names a familiar song she has heard; then she plays the song by ear on the violin. An audience of family members and friends can be entertained for hours by her renditions of classical music, selections from Broadway musicals, and country music hits. Recently, at the end of one impromptu concert, I asked Elisabeth to play something she really liked. Her eager response was an enthusiastic mimic of Brittany Spears' "Oops! . . . I Did It Again." Elisabeth's performance included an exact replication of Spears' sexualized Mouseketeer movements from her music video and placed an explicit emphasis on the lyrics from the song's chorus, shouting the words "I'm not that innocent." Elisabeth is a smart young woman who loves studying science, practices the violin several hours a day, and lives in a home without cable television. However, she is also influenced by an image-based world where she can see the Spears video on MTV at a friend's house or on the omnipresent video monitors in department stores while she is shopping for school clothes with her mother.

Like most young people today, Elisabeth is navigating a world of images without a media sextant. The ubiquitous outlets and expressions of our mass-media culture create a sea of content whose meanings are erratically interpreted as their audience digests them. In contrast to Elisabeth's estrangement from her own world of innocence through Spears' visual and verbal expression of rejected innocence, another young woman found affirmation of those seemingly antiquated values in a different artist and a different song, but within the same media construct and context. In diametric opposition to "I'm not that innocent," Jewel's lyric of "I'm sensitive and I'd like to stay that way" from her

song "Every Day Angels" was read by a former high school student of mine as a confirmation of teaching from parents and church to embrace innocence.

Each young woman turned to mediated content to contextualize her own world; one found alienation and the other found affirmation, each conclusion being reached randomly. Both young women responded to specific production, distribution, and artistic choices, which were specifically designed to influence people in their age demographic. Each approached the content and the messengers as authoritative. The dissimilar results are characteristic of the dilemma that family and community educators face as they approach mass-media messages that can be affirmative and alienating, informative and manipulative, often all at the same time. It is a quandary that is created when adolescent experience comes in contact with corporate sophistication.

The 2000 U.S Census Report registered 31.6 million twelve to nineteen year olds in the United States (Evans 2000, 1). This is the largest generation of youth culture ever recorded and has proven to be an irresistible target for mass-media marketing executives. Teen Research Unlimited reports that in the year 2000, teens spent an estimated \$105 billion dollars and influenced their parents to spend another \$48 billion dollars (2000). We must acknowledge that the mass media have power to influence our children. Our responsibility as teachers and parents is to help students develop skills to understand the media's messages and the varying points of view the media presents as authoritative and authentic. This can only happen if we learn to respect and value both the artistic and promotional power the media have in our culture and the influence they have in the lives of our young people. The only way we can do this is to provide mediated opportunities for

students in educational settings.

Creating mediated experiences in the classroom requires that teacher evaluate their current teaching methods and make an effort to fuse media images into their classroom pedagogy. To do this, teachers must recognize that students are already bombarded with a multiplicity of images. Their school world is filled with word and paper images that encourage students to develop a sense of self by learning mostly about the past. It is in this atmosphere that I have often heard students exiting a discussion of eighteenth-century British literature, or a similar subject, asking: "What does this have to do with me?" In contrast, their life outside of school is crammed with provocative mediated images. These images are viewed as authoritative and therefore have tremendous influence over the students' world perspective.

Outside the classroom adolescents are immersed in information about their own global, popular culture with increasingly sophisticated delivery systems such as satellites, cellular technology, and cable and computer networks. Our mediated world challenges them to acquire and digest more information than in any other generation. Educators teaching in this new world of technology are responsible for giving this flood of information meaning. Students understand, manipulate, and even dominate the devices that access vast amounts of information, but are often mystified by the volume and complexity of that information. Educators could contribute significant literary meaning by providing a context for this information avalanche.

Furnishing contextual skills could be one of the most vital services that an educator might render to students who live in our constantly self-referencing culture. These contextual skills are precisely those that are part of a class curriculum that applies contemporary critical theory templates to the most popular forms of technological literature.

### **Create a Rubric for Reading the Media**

Recently, Brigham Young University Media Arts Education students participated in a media strategies workshop with seventh and eighth

grade students from Mountain Ridge Junior High School in Utah's Alpine School District. Adolescents were asked to examine and evaluate the cover of a *Marvel Comic Book* and a Ralph Lauren advertisement taken from *Teen Vogue*. We began by asking the students to respond to a set of questions about the media images presented. Our questions assumed that all media could be a story and were presented in the following order:

- What is the story?
- Who is the storyteller?
- What techniques is the storyteller using?
- Why is the storyteller telling this particular story?
- Who is the story for and why is the story being told to that audience?
- Is the story accurate, fair or complete? If not, what information or perspectives are absent and why are they left out?

Creating a set of questions helped us generate a dialogue based on their insights regarding the popular images. From this general base, the BYU student educators guided the junior high school students to a more in-depth exploration of the aesthetic choices and marketing decisions made in the creation of the images.

The media rubric is a device that leads students to begin thinking and talking. A well-planned rubric allows them to begin a conversation with teacher that can then lead to formal, guided discussions. For example, a teacher might expand the base dialogue to include a social/cultural discussion that addresses the unique formations of individual visual literacy skills, a discussion of aesthetic values (line, color, texture, shape, dimension) of the visual image, or a review of historical information about comic book design and magazine advertisements.

The educator creating the media rubric should consider the age, race, gender, economic standing, and basic analytical skills of the students. Educators should elicit a quality analysis from the question base they create with those considerations. One substantive work on media literacy, *Literacy in Multimedia America: Integrating Media Education Across the Curriculum*, by Ladislaus Semali, suggests that five key concepts should be integrated into any

classroom discussion of the media. Semali outlines his framework, saying, "The key concepts I am talking about form the foundations of any serious analysis and an important analytic framework students can use to develop questions that engage a critical reflection of the media texts in their everyday lives" (2000, 90). The key concepts of this framework are that

- All media messages are constructions,
- Media messages are representations of social reality,
- Individuals construct meaning from messages,
- Media messages have economic, political, social, and aesthetic purposes, and
- Each media form of communication has unique characteristics.

From Semali's framework teachers can build questions appropriate for their own classroom. This structure can also be used for teachers to devise mediated classroom activities that help students practice the concepts developed in classroom discussions regarding the media.

### **Understanding the Construction of the Mediated Image**

Educators who assume the challenge of developing a critical, media literacy in the classroom must recognize that students take educational cues from their previous learning experience. Students bring a number of valuable literate experiences as well as familiar patterns of learning to the classroom. It is the teacher's responsibility to guide students from traditional learning paradigms to a more expansive learning experience that allows them to develop their own acute observations about the global community landscape, prominent corporate groups that influence their decision making process, and popular culture functioning as art. Students who are allowed to combine these new observations with critical thinking tools established through traditional educational experience can adopt new ways of thinking that expand on their past experience to include a critical evaluation of the world they value

One way of expanding a student's critical thinking dexterity is to model an analysis of

ways in which images are constructed. A teacher should also encourage students to ask why each image is constructed the way it is. In her seminal article *Skills and Strategies for Media Education*, Elizabeth Thoman asserts the importance of students recognizing images that are created through careful planning and design. She says,

Whether we are watching the nightly news or passing a billboard on the street, the media message we experience was written by someone (or probably several people), pictures were taken and a creative designer put it all together. But this is more than a physical process. What happens is that whatever is "constructed" by just a few people then becomes "the way it is" for the rest of us. But as the audience, we don't get to see or hear the words, pictures or arrangements that were rejected. We only see, hear or read what was accepted... Each form of communication—newspapers, TV game shows or horror movies—has its own creative language: scary music heightens fear, camera close-ups convey intimacy, big headlines signal significance. Understanding the grammar, syntax and metaphor system of media language increases our appreciation and enjoyment of media experiences, as well as helps us to be less susceptible to manipulation. (1998)

Thoman suggests that the best way for students to recognize the construction of media images is to deconstruct a given image in a classroom discussion. She encourages students and teachers to assess the value of the choices made by the artist or producer, and then allow the students to create their own media materials based on principles they learned from the mediated image discussed in class. Helping students develop an advertising campaign, build a web site for a product, or create a storyboard for a short commercial or film are some of her suggestions.

Educators must also recognize and value students' past experience with media texts. Before teachers engage students in new readings of media texts, they must discover how students have read those texts in the past. Teachers should value past undeveloped reading experiences as part of the students' literate

nature. They should also help students view past media reading experiences as valuable tools that will enhance future study. This can be especially valuable in a class where adolescents are allowed to study the media, a subject they feel they understand well. Teachers can then connect that revelry for the media to their core disciplines. Literature, language, art, science, and history then become more than graded exercises; they become irrevocably linked to the enhancement of students' tastes, preferences, and very lives.

Educators must invite students to listen to their own responses as they study media texts, and then help students understand where their answers come from. This process can help students identify cultural bias, encourage the exposure of hidden forms of student literacy, and develop a teacher-student learning community. By locating student responses to the text, a teacher exposes students to the idea of multiple textual readings, and demonstrates that the students as individuals who have a value system based on their own community landscape construct meaning in media texts. Discussions should encourage students to observe the unique ways that they as individuals can construct messages from media texts. Media educators should also motivate students to expand their ideas of text study to include context. Teachers should stimulate their students to see the interrelated nature of texts and community standards of evaluation. Providing this scaffolding for students will allow them to continue their study of texts beyond the classroom.

### **Discovering the Hidden Message or the Intertextual Dig**

Students who read the media must understand that media messages often have hidden meanings. Teachers should make it a classroom quest to uncover both overt and covert meanings, as well as discover the interrelatedness of multiple texts. One approach to the discovery of hidden messages is to create a technology bricoleur, or a person (in our case individual students) who researches, appropriates, and recombines mediated materials to create their own discoveries and meanings

according to their own personal needs. In "Postmodernism", an essay from *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*, Jim Collins examines Claude Lèvi-Stauss's anthropological term bricolage as it relates to a dig through mediated artifacts. He asserts,

The term *bricolage*, developed by anthropologists to describe the ways primitive tribes-people piece together random elements they encounter in their day-to-day lives, has recently been applied to the behavior of individuals in contemporary media cultures... Many television programs, films, popular songs, and other manifestations of popular culture are already the result of sophisticated forms of bricolage, already conscious of the multiple ways they might be understood. (1992, 337-8)

If we mine Collins' description of mediated bricolage for classroom lesson plans we can begin to develop activities in a intertextual dig where students appreciate the relationship between media production and their own reception of that medium. Students acting as technological bricoleurs in a classroom setting could gather information on a media product and then, through research of related cultural subjects, develop personal conclusions about the mediated subject.

For example, in the summer of 2001, media educators attending a workshop session became technology bricoleurs. The BMW automobile company recently commissioned award-winning directors to make short films as advertisements for its current product line. During the workshop the participants were asked to focus on one of the short films, *Star*, which is directed by Guy Ritchie and stars Madonna. The workshop participants were then required to discover interrelated connections of other media products to series. They were provided with magazines and newspaper articles as well as other media samples to help them in their research, but they had to make the connections. Conclusions about the information gathered were appropriately varied; each participant made valuable observations about the interrelatedness of mediated images and their effect on what is valued in our culture.

Madonna, Guy Richie, and BMW proved to be excellent subject matter for the workshop because information for the bricolage experiment was readily at hand to the adult participants that we were catering to. The subject matter for classroom practice of a bricolage discussion would require careful thought by the instructor or discussion leader to include elements that are readily available in the knowledge base of the students. Additional suggestions for bricolage assignments sprang from our discussion at the workshop. One individual suggested that the same exercise could be performed for younger students in a K-6 classroom using stars featured in advertisements for Disney Land and perhaps seen in programming on the Disney Channel or on A.B.C. or ESPN (networks owned by Disney). Another bricoleur group suggested an assignment in which students sampled and then recombined a variety of media texts that represented how students themselves fit in the world. The piecing together of various mediums would become a statement of who the students were in relation to the media. By juxtaposing a range of media objects they would be able to accept or reject themes the media presented. Seeing connections between various mediums—web sites, film, television, and print materials—helps students understand that each medium is interrelated; and, as critically literate individuals, they can, and should, define and then deconstruct messages in multiple texts. Connections discovered as technology bricoleurs can empower students to seek meaning in a variety of texts and then create their own diverse meanings as they discover the interrelatedness of individual texts.

### **Valuing Unique Characteristics of Individual Media Samples**

While assignments like media bricolage help students see the possible economic, political, social, and aesthetic interconnections between a variety of media subjects and themselves, it is also important that students begin to appreciate each medium for its unique value as an artistic product. Despite the fact that medium-specific arguments are mostly obsolete, teachers and educational theorists interested in discussing

mass media with young people often err by lumping various media subjects into one group, thereby disregarding the inimitability of each medium. Teachers using media in the classroom must instead work to understand an individual medium's method of construction and master the basic skills necessary to use that medium before attempting to examine texts created by that medium. For example, Vivi Lachs, the writer of *Making Multimedia in the Classroom*, describes the need for her students to be aware of the devices and conventions used in computer design as well as the strategies used to develop narratives for computer games before they begin to create their own designs for the multimedia authoring projects that they create in her classroom. Understanding terminology and techniques distinctive to computer design is an integral part of the students' processes, first as observers of multimedia products, and then as creators of their own multimedia product. Like Lach, teachers creating media discussions or practice in the classroom should guide students through concepts solely related to the medium before they focus on the intertextual nature of mass media. The base of knowledge that students garner from studying media forms individually will help them as they work to see the connections and appropriations of themes and procedures in the mediated world at large.

These examples barely begin to address the potential impact that developing a media curriculum in the language arts, humanities, or arts classroom can have on young people. While I have dealt with a few theories and suggested some practice ideas, I encourage all educators to explore a variety of positions related to media education. In the bibliography I included several important texts and web sites that will help you as you begin your pursuit of media education resources. I hope the possibilities and potentials in media education can persuade parents and teachers to explore curriculum changes in which students can develop the skills that will prepare them to productively use the media that surrounds them. Our respect for, and value of, media texts could drastically improve the creative and analytical skills of students who already understand the significance of their experience as recreational readers of the media. An active pursuit of media education

experiences for young people developed by teachers and parent organizations could help

students find their way in a congested world of images.

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