



Burke, Jim. (1999). *I Hear America Reading; Why We Read What We Read*. Portsmouth, NH: [Heinemann](#).

Jim Burke is a high school English teacher who was frustrated and discouraged. At a loss as to how to deal with high school sophomores who claimed to "hate" reading and who found it a "chore" and a "curse," he sent a letter to the local newspaper. He invited readers to write to his students and tell them about the role that books and reading had played in their lives. Burke was in no way expecting the overwhelming response he received. Eventually, the class received over four hundred letters. Letters came from writers of all ages, several nationalities, and many walks of life. They range from a letter sent by a prisoner who pondered the justice of his situation to another from a youngster who liked that fact that his parents would let him stay up late to read. Various letters praise everything from comic books to Milton.

For this book, Burke selected and reprinted letters from readers who shared their passion for reading and who recounted how books and reading had changed their lives. Various letters describe how readers used books to escape from loneliness, fear and even abusive situations. I found the emotion expressed in these letters heartwarming, and the quality of the writing extraordinary. As educators, the focus of our work often seems to be on the mechanics of reading. It is easy to forget that many of us entered our profession because we loved to read and had been thrilled by the emotions and ideas derived from reading. These letters remind us of the power of reading and the importance of introducing students to reading and literature.

Each letter is introduced by a quote from a famous person pondering books or reading. Authors represented include Frank McCourt, Woody Allen, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Zora Neale Hurston. This eclectic mix of quotations, although not the focus of the book, is valuable. Good quotes about books and reading can be difficult to locate, and Burke has assembled a nice collection. An appendix includes several reading lists. Some categories include Ten Books for People Who think the World is Absurd, Ten Books About Books, Ten Books to Read Aloud in the Car While Traveling, Ten Books a Teenage Boy Would Want to Read, and Ten Books to Make You Laugh Out Loud. Again, I think this type of list can be valuable and difficult to locate. Many of these lists as well as other information for teachers is located on Burke's Web site (<http://www.englishcompanion.com>).

I have already admitted that I found this book "heartwarming," but I suspect that if I purchased this book for the library, it would probably sit on the shelf. The subject heading is "Books and Reading--United States," not a subject heading I see being used frequently. This book needs to be shared. It would be useful in a workshop for teachers or in a teacher resource collection. It has the power to inspire. Teachers who question the value of what they do or who, like Burke, are discouraged and frustrated, can be revived and encouraged by this book.

Pages: 116 Price: \$12.50 ISBN: 0-325-00134-0

Reviewed by Sharon Naylor, Illinois State University

Mark Harper, Ken O'Connor, and Marilyn Simpson. (1999). *Quality Assessment: Fitting the Pieces Together*. Toronto: [Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation](#).

Quality Assessment begins by defining and clarifying the terms regarding assessment and discussing the reasons for renewed focus on assessment. It explores issues such as: validity, reliability, equity, "at-risk" students, ESL students and special education students. Some of this is a bit heavy for those of us who still get chills when anyone mentions statistics, but it is necessary background information. The author does a commendable job of making a complex topic as easy to understand as possible.

The central section of the book discusses assessment as it fits into the Ontario Ministry of Education's philosophy including the assessment implications of the Secondary School Reform in Ontario. Of specific interest are the achievement levels and the provincial report card.

Chapter five will be of the greatest assistance to teachers who are attempting to cope with new assessment policies and strategies. It provides fifty pages of practical strategies and techniques for effective assessment: models for student achievement, self and peer assessment grids, information on the use of portfolios, assessment strategies, paper and pencil assessment tools, performance assessment indicators and assessment tools.

The book goes on to discuss data gathering, analyzing, reporting and communicating results to parents, students and the community. It explores the need for staff development and training in assessment and reporting and provides an extensive list of teacher resources. The book concludes with a valuable annotated bibliography for those who wish to explore the topic further.

Quality Assessment: Fitting the Pieces Together has been written at a time when teachers are searching for support in changing their assessment and reporting strategies. This useful book is timely, credible and practical.

Pages: 246 Price: \$20.00 Canadian ISBN: 0-920930-47-6

Reviewed by Gail Lennon, Bluewater District School Board (Ontario, Canada)

Knapp, Sara D. (2000). *Contemporary Thesaurus of Search Terms and Synonyms: A Guide for Natural Language Computer Searching*. Second Edition. Phoenix, AZ : [Oryx](#).

This is an unusual selection for these reviews. The book is larger and more expensive than any previously reviewed, and it is not exclusively related to the field of education. But the book is also unique in a number of ways that might make it attractive for educators. Information literacy, which includes the effective use of Internet resources, is a life skill that schools are increasingly expected to strengthen. The listings in this book should provide food for thought to many a struggling Internet user.

This *Thesaurus* is the next evolutionary step from the familiar *Roget's* model. It offers words or phrases, "concepts" is the author's term, and then suggests how the concept might be discussed on a relevant web page. For example, the entry for:

Ability level(s).

Choose from: abilit(y, ies), aptitude(s), expertise, skill(s), competenc(e, y, ies), proficienc(y, ies), talent(s) *with* level(s), difference(s), comparison(s), rating(s). *See also* Ability; Ability grouping; Ability identification; Competence; Educational attainment; Influence of age on ability; Intelligence quotient; Knowledge level.

offers the searcher a wealth of ideas for search construction and may help with the selection of more precise language. This is actually one of the shorter entries; many are three or more inches long. The mere idea of searching a number of synonyms may be a novel concept to some beginning searchers.

The author has gleaned her suggestions from standard database thesauri, including the *ERIC Thesaurus*, dictionaries and word lists. In order to achieve concept grouping Knapp utilizes a fairly large number of *see* references, which are no one's favorite, but are standard fare for a thesaurus. The price is the biggest obstacle to widespread use. *Roget's* can be had for about \$50.00. At \$125.00 a copy only larger schools will be able to afford to keep a copy of Knapp's book near the computers. This is a second edition; the original version covered only the social sciences. The expanded coverage may help the title become a more central part of the Internet searchers' repertoire.

Pages: 682 Price: \$125.00 ISBN: 1-57356-107-x

Reviewed by Kate Corby, Michigan State University

McCandless Amy Thompson. (1999). *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South*. Tuscaloosa, AL: [University of Alabama Press](#).

In this impressively researched book, McCandless provides a wealth of detail tracing the unique history of higher education in the South. The book is very readable, often following an exemplary case for several pages and giving the feeling of a series of mini-stories within a story. McCandless looks at the paths of successful women and also offers a broader overview of Southern culture as it

impacted the educational aspirations of women.

As a northerner, who lived in the South briefly, I found the book particularly interesting for the way it attempts to convey the importance of 'southernness' to identity development for many who are raised in the South. Southern culture is important even for those who are also poor, black or female, the three groups most disadvantaged by the tradition. McCandless contends that the unique culture of the South is both an outgrowth of its economic situation and a powerful force in the continuation of Southern traditions that limit access to certain types of education for all Southerners, but especially those who are poor, black, or female. She argues that the Southern identity is a force in the lives and decision of its children, and shows convincingly how it contributed to both the ills that racial tensions and sexual stereotyping bred, but also to the strength of character and determination that led to change.

The author presumes a familiarity with the history of higher education in the twentieth century. While making her case for the uniqueness of the Southern experience, McCandless offers little comparative information showing how events in the South played out differently than similar issues at Northern colleges and universities, but this is fairly weak criticism of an otherwise excellent book.

Pages: 389 Price: \$49.95 Cloth, \$24.95 Paper ISBN: 0-8173 0945 4 Cloth, 0-8173-0994-2 Paper

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