



Anderson, Rebecca S. & Speck, Bruce W. (2001) *Using Technology in K-8 Literacy Classrooms*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Anderson and Speck want elementary teachers to have it all when it comes to introducing technology into the literacy classroom. They offer chapters on using computers to teach, facilitating student use, using the Internet and other electronic tools, computers in writing and publishing and computers in special education and English as a Second Language (ESL). For each of these topics the book covers both the research basis of the suggestions and practical examples for implementation. That's a lot to promise in 196 pages, but in many ways they succeed.

Technology beginners will find solid information to help them understand how easy integrating a computer into class work can be -- the first example involves simply bringing students to a computer lab to type a story, with help from older students who are already familiar with the equipment. The research backgrounds, while not extensive, offer basic information about why the suggested activities are supported by current theories of teaching and learning. Possible pitfalls, such as assessment difficulties with collaborative work are mentioned.

The chapter topics may be a bit misleading about the range of topics covered. For instance in the section on the Internet, there is not only a list of recommended sites, and a discussion of the various types of services--chat, email, newsgroups, etc.--but also a fairly lengthy introduction to HTML coding.

Obviously with so much to cover, nothing gets covered in much depth. The research basis of the book is well documented in bibliographies at the end of each chapter. The practical examples, lesson ideas and web links are supplemented by the book's web site at <http://www.prenhall.com/anderson> which links to lesson plans and background reading.

It wouldn't be a book about computers without a few outdated links--actually I only found one--but overall this is a high quality, high utility item for technology beginners.

Pages: **196** Price: **\$27.00** ISBN: **0-13-936337-8**

Reviewed by Kate Corby, Michigan State University

**Fountas, Irene C. & Pinnell, Gay Su (2000) *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3-6): Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy*.
Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

It is no secret that students, who are actively engaged in constructing knowledge, using a wide variety of resources and projects, are more successful learners and consequently better prepared to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing technological society. Teachers interested in establishing and encouraging this educational experience need not be daunted by the task. This book provides a wealth of information to assist educators in developing writing, reading, and information literacy skills.

The previous works of Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guided Reading, Interactive Writing* and numerous professional articles, have established them as distinguished contributors to the field of children's writing. In *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3-6)*, Fountas and Pinnell provide educators with targeted resources to help teachers develop more effective reading and writing programs within these specific grades and to help students "discover their voices as writers and refine their instincts as readers." (p. iv) The authors acknowledge the effect continued collaboration with scholars associated with this field has had on establishing a foundation that informs "teachers and researchers about the value and processes of writing" and contributes philosophical and conceptual ideas "seminal to our framework." (p.iv)

This work is organized into six individual sections that investigate critical portions of a effective literacy program:

1. Breakthrough to Literacy
2. Independent Reading
3. Guided Reading
4. Literature Study
5. Teaching for Comprehension and Word Analysis
6. The Reading and Writing Connection

Each section provides a thorough, thoughtful, detailed exploration of issues, topics, pedagogical strategies, and activities relevant to fostering reading, writing, and literacy competencies. Also included are descriptions of effective classroom environment, time management, "minilessons," and processes for connecting and implementing reading/writing in instructional situations. Each section concludes with a feature entitled "Struggling Readers and Writers: Teaching that Makes a Difference." This segment is designed to help teachers meet the challenge of instructing students who possess a wide diversity of reading and writing skills by suggesting specific teaching ideas for those who need extra help. Collectively, these sections present a comprehensive plan for teachers endeavoring to develop a structure that supports a language/literacy program as well as guidelines to

promoting individual reading interests, effective group reading sessions, vibrant literature experiences and dynamic class literary discussions.

Most books of this nature contain illustrations, charts, diagrams, and/or other graphic enhancements, however, this book is exceptional. Extensive illustrations depicting student work and exceptional photographs provide distinctive visual resources that truly prove that a picture is worth a thousand words. In particular, the photographs (by Mark Morelli) offer a glimpse at classroom life and how communities of learning might be designed and organized to foster development in reading and writing skills. Numerous charts suggest teaching tools and techniques to augment effective literacy learning. The book concludes with sixty-one appendices designed by the authors to support "language/word study, reading and writing workshops, and literary assessment", (p.511) the 500 most frequently used words, spelling "demons", as well as relevant websites, children's magazines, graphic organizers, professional texts, and books for guided reading organized by title and level.

For upper elementary school teachers interested in a comprehensive, well-organized approach to effective reading, writing, and literacy instruction, look no further. This book will exceed your expectations and inspire you as well.

Pages: **672** Price: **\$37.50** ISBN: **0-325-00310-6**

Reviewed by Francine M. DeFranco, University of Connecticut

**Lehr, Susan, editor (2001) *Beauty, Brains, and Brawn: The Construction of Gender in Children's Literature*.
Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

Beauty Brains and Brawn is a collection of fourteen essays and eleven short "Author Profiles." The editor, Susan Lehr, is also the editor of *Battling Dragons: Issues and Controversy in Children's Literature*, also published by Heinemann. Readers familiar with *Battling Dragons* will recognize the format and several of the essayists in the newer book. The essays, although scholarly, are accessible and appropriate for both undergraduate and graduate students exploring gender construction in children's literature.

Essays include "The Hidden Curriculum: Are We Teaching Young Girls to Wait for the Prince?" by Susan Lehr, "Picture Books for Preschool Children: Exploring Gender Issues with Three- and Four-Year Olds" by Barbara Chatton, "Are Authors Rewriting Folklore in Today's Image?" by Margaret Chang, and "The Unquenchable Source: Finding a Heroic Girl Inside a Man" by T.A. Barron. The essays represent a variety of viewpoints. Some of them call upon teachers and

authors to use fiction to help girls see their potential, but others note that women's behavior has been constrained by historical and cultural limitations and that these considerations must be taken into account. One author regrets that J.K. Rowling does not use her considerable influence to create a less stereotypical character than that of Hermione in the Harry Potter novels. Another author comments on the relative merit of the books she had written as a ghostwriter for the popular Sweet Valley High series. A third essayist notes that writers of historical fiction must portray the world as it was and create characters that are somehow typical of their settings.

The "Author Profiles" include well-known children's authors and illustrators. Included are Virginia Hamilton, Katherine Paterson, Mem Fox, Gary Paulsen, Paul O. Zelinsky and Jerry Pinkney. These are not "interviews" in the traditional sense, but are first-person narratives allowing the authors and illustrators to discuss their writing and their views on the role of gender in children's literature.

Gender issues in children's literature is a popular topic, and this book is a welcome addition to the literature. Highly recommended.

Pages: **212** Price: **\$21.00** ISBN: **0-325-00284-3 (paper)**

Reviewed by Sharon Naylor, Illinois State University

**Portalupi, Joann & Fletcher, Ralph (2001) *Nonfiction Craft Lessons: Teaching Information Writing K-8*.
Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.**

This title is a follow-up to Fletcher and Portalupi's 1998 publication *Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K-8*, and its format is very similar to the earlier work. The biggest problem with this book is the title, *Nonfiction Craft Lessons*. You have to work hard at reminding yourself that the authors are not referring to "arts and crafts." The "craft" the authors are referring to is the "craft of writing." Once you get that firmly planted in your mind you will find this to be a wonderful book of very practical ideas on how to encourage K-8 students to write nonfiction.

Like many books that use children's literature to encourage children to write stories, this book contains about 80 mini lessons. The activities are designed to improve student writing of reports and persuasive and/or expository essays. The book is divided into three grade level sections: K-2; 3-4; and 5-8. Each section starts with a brief discussion of the abilities of students in that particular grade range. Most of the single page activity descriptions incorporate a children's nonfiction book such as *Lincoln: A Photobiography* by Russell Freedman or *A Medieval Feast* by Alike. There is brief introductory discussion for each lesson telling why the authors chose the activity and the book. Then

'How to Teach It' explains how the teacher might teach the lesson. The lessons are engaging, simple, and to the point.

Both students and teachers will enjoy these activities and see an improvement in student writing ability.

Pages: **160** Price: **\$17.50** ISBN: **1-57110-329-5**

Reviewed by Judy Walker, University of North Carolina, Charlotte



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