



Daniels, Harvey (2002) *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups*. 2nd edition. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Book clubs and literature circles have grown and changed since the first, 1994 edition of this book. The author freely admits that the idea he and his colleagues began in Chicago has become popular nationwide. Definitely, this is an idea whose time has come, with or without the help of Oprah Winfrey. Reading teachers and classroom teachers have been using the group activity of peer-led reading discussion groups for many years. Harvey Daniels shares expertise and enthusiasm for his version of literature circles.

Daniels' teaching method includes "role sheets," which give students different, changing tasks to begin the discussions. The role sheets are guidelines to begin the conversation about the book. Daniels complains about teachers, or student groups who merely follow the questions on the role sheets. He presents examples of flexible uses of the role sheets, which other teachers have used. He also presents examples of literature circles for different ages of students. Even first graders can have student led reading groups. The teacher who proposed this wants her students to rely on their own reactions to the stories, rather than have the teacher dominate the discussion. A different technique is used to prompt responses for nonfiction books, which are usually for older readers.

The drawback to the popularity of reading circles is the assessment mania of documenting progress, and grading everything. Does the amount of time spent in reading circle discussions pay off in higher test scores? Daniels is sure that it happens. Students are reading more, teachers are reading more. The National Council of Teachers of English has endorsed the reading circles, and research literature from the mid 1990's has shown that an increase in 'reading circles,' 'literature discussion groups,' 'cooperative book discussion groups,' and similar terms are linked to improving student achievement scores.

This book refers to a video, *Looking into Literature Circles*, which I did not see, but the book does stand on its own. Also, the website, <http://www.literaturecircles.com/> is an on-line resource where teachers can exchange ideas about book clubs, children's work, and classroom successes and failures. *Literature Circles* offers the practicing teacher good practical advice on how to carry out the technique of book discussion groups for all ages. It also provides evidence for the benefits of using this program.

Pages: 256 Price: \$22.50 ISBN: 1-57110-333-3

Reviewed by Helga Visscher, University of Alabama

Draper, Sharon M. (2001) *Not Quite Burned Out But Crispy Around the Edges: Inspiration, Laughter, and Encouragement for Teachers*. Westport, CT: Heinemann.

Sharon Draper is a seasoned educator and in her book *Not Quite Burned Out*, she shares her thirty years of teaching experience with the reader. She shares her knowledge, her fellow teachers' experiences, and her heart as well. She stresses issues that most teachers face and shares methods of teaching some of her colleagues have used. By detailing a variety of experiences, she directs this book at all teachers.

These are stories of triumph, tragedy, and tribulation. The tragic stories are not designed to deter teachers but do portray the reality of some classrooms and the community beyond school. Draper feels that if we see the tragic, we can enjoy the triumphs even more. She starts and ends the book with inspirational stories told to help the new teacher understand what they have embarked on, that they have a journey with hardships and victories. She reminds seasoned teachers why they started and why they should stay in the field of education.

The author conveys that teachers are not alone in helping students. Parents are important contributors to the child's development. Her experience sheds light on what teachers can do to get parents involved and how to open the school doors to interested parents. She urges teachers to take initiative and show parents how to embrace an active role in their child's education.

Draper emphasizes that each teacher needs to know his/her students. Students bring the outside world into the classroom and those feelings and emotions will affect the student's behavior and learning ability. Teaching methods should be student centered. The book cites cases of how some teachers adapt their teaching philosophy to incorporate students' background and environment: "She decided that the only solution was to teach them by using their rules not hers, their knowledge base instead of her own" (p. 12).

One such case involves a ninth-grade English teacher who, after struggling against the influence of television, decided to give, "homework assignments that required her students to watch television intelligently" (p. 17). The ninth-grade class eventually took responsibility to, "write, produce and direct their own television show" (p. 17). This and other examples illustrate how teachers can solve the real problems encountered when trying to meet state regulated standards and raise the abilities of their students.

Along with the true stories, Draper adds a couple of fictional stories for courage and inspiration. Each story has its own message to the reader. The first story asks that we keep our eye on the big picture and the second enlightens us about obstacles that we may encounter. She has a wonderful way of spinning a tale to emphasize her point, but she also makes the reading enjoyable without sounding preachy.

To conclude, Draper weaves inspiration and tragedy together with ideas and methods to bring new and old teachers a book that will provoke thought and emotion. She explores her philosophies and those of her colleagues to make the reader think about their students, how to teach them, and how to interact with them everyday. She is a wonderful storyteller and an inspiration to all teachers who deeply believe in what they are trying to accomplish. I strongly recommend that you pick up this book and have a look for yourself.

Pages: 117 Price: \$13.95 ISBN: 0-325-00365-3

Reviewed by Craig Robinson, Point Loma Nazarene University

James, John W., & Friedman, Russell (2002) *When Children Grieve: For Adults to Help Children Deal with Death, Divorce, Pet Loss, Moving, and Other Losses*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Everyone deals with grief at some point in life. *When Children Grieve* by John James and Russell Friedman is an amazingly helpful book. After the recent death of a dear friend, I needed help in understanding grief from a child's perspective. This easy to read book explains that it's healthy to grieve, and that adults need to allow children time to heal. "Children need to feel bad when their hearts are broken." (p. 27) Adults should never try to fix a child's loss.

Dividing the book into five parts, James and Friedman critically examine the myths about grief, the recovery process, completion of the process, self-discovery, and other losses. Beginning with grief, they say adults should never say to a child "don't feel bad." (p. 34) If this simple phrase is expressed, emotional harm could be done to the youngster.

The authors also say grief should not be replaced. Two examples of this myth are when adults replace the stolen bicycle right away to appease the child, and in the immediate wake of the family dog's death, the parents go out and get a new puppy to stop the child from mourning the loss of his beloved canine companion. The authors believe this mourning period is healthy and natural. "The emotional attachments children make are essential to happy lives." (p. 30)

Also, the book explains that grief doesn't just come from death, but instead can be motivated by divorce, pet loss, moving, and even a

parent's job loss. The books tells us that grief stems from sudden change in ritualistic behavior. As adults, it is our role to facilitate the child's emotions by helping them discover "undelivered communications," messages that they meant to express before the loss, but never did.

Philosophically speaking, I agree with the authors' view that "Time doesn't heal—actions do." (p. 9) Adults can help stimulate the youngster's healing by initiating the recovery process. Forgiveness is essential for this to happen though. Apologies for these undelivered communications can be made through journal writing and goodbye letters. However, it is imperative that the adult lead the way.

This book teaches adults how to reach out to children and guide them through difficult times. It's a must read for all educators, administrators, guidance counselors, and especially parents who want to encourage emotional growth and mental well being in children. There is no "normal" formula for dealing with grief, yet this book makes sense. Pick it up, it's definitely worth owning!

Pages: **256** Price: **\$13.95** ISBN: **0-06-008429-4**

Reviewed by Dana Greene, Point Loma Nazarene University

More Lesson Plans for Substitute Teachers: Classroom-tested activities from the National Council of Teachers of English. (2002) Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

This short book provides 25 lesson plans that a substitute teacher could use in middle school or high school English classrooms. The lesson plans are divided into five sections: Public Speaking, Language Exploration/Vocabulary, Prewriting/Writing, Developing a Character, and Poetry. The lessons have been tested in the classroom, and do not require expertise on the part of the substitute teacher. The lesson topics are interesting and should spark lively classroom discussions and/or writing.

The popularity of the first collection of lesson plans published by NCTE in 1989 lead to the creation of this new volume. The lesson plans were previously published in various issues of Classroom Notes Plus, a quarterly publication of NCTE, portions of which are available on their website: <http://www.ncte.org/notesplus/index.shtml>.

Pages: **40** Price: **\$15.95** ISBN: **0814132170**

Reviewed by Kathy M. Irwin, University of Michigan— Dearborn

Schofield, Janet Ward & Davidson, Ann Locke (2002). *Bringing the Internet to School: Lessons from an Urban District*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

For 5 years, from 1993 to 1998, the authors studied an effort called the Networking for Education Testbed (NET). This project integrated the use of the Internet into the classrooms of the "Waterford Public Schools (WPS), a large urban school system." (p. 4) The authors aim was to present "a close examination of the human and organizational processes that shape Internet use and its consequences in the classroom." (p. 6) The book was written "for anyone interested in understanding more about the use of the Internet in schools, including teachers, administrators, parents and scholars." (p. xii) Their research method consisted of "intensive qualitative observation and interviews." (p. 25)

By and large the authors succeed, but they present their findings in the dry, exacting, boring, polysyllabic mode of the research paper. Had they chosen to sail a bit closer to the wind and write in a more vital style, it might have been easier to learn the lessons they wish to expose. I feel certain that this early implementation of the Internet in a public school had to be more interesting than this account.

The book is organized into nine chapters:

1. Introduction
2. Building Demand and Support for Internet Use Among Educators
3. School Versus Internet Culture: Implications for Communication with the Outside World
4. How School Culture and Structure Shape Internet Use
5. Achieving Internet Use: Lessons from NET Schools
6. Classroom Change Accompanying Internet Use
7. Teacher and Student Outcomes Related to Internet Use
8. Achieving Institutionalization
9. Conclusion

I suggest reading the Introduction and then skipping to the Conclusion (especially the section headed: "THE INTERNET'S IMPACT IS VARIABLE, OFTEN POSITIVE, AND STRONGEST ON DIMENSIONS OTHER THAN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT"). Save the rest for times when sleep is difficult or time is plentiful.

Pages: **393** Price: **\$27.00** ISBN: **0-7879-5686-4**

Reviewed by Arie C. Koelewyn

Stead, Tony (2002) *Is That a Fact?: Teaching Nonfiction*

Writing K-3. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Efforts at instructing young writers have traditionally focused on fiction forms: narrative, poetry, diaries and journals. Yet, the writing required of students as they progress academically is clearly nonfiction. Author Tony Stead, a literacy consultant and former classroom teacher, shares his belief that young students are capable, highly capable in fact, of writing nonfiction. Not to the exclusion of fiction, Stead notes, but as one component of a well-rounded writing instruction program.

Stead's book, *Is That a Fact?*, explores how teachers can incorporate nonfiction writing into their K-3 curriculum. Divided into two sections, the book first discusses theory, outlining the need for and reasons behind nonfiction writing instruction for young students. Here he also talks about how to help youngsters with research and gives guidelines on spelling instruction. Section two tackles the practical, looking at specific methods, techniques and assignments that have been successfully used in classrooms. A question and answer chapter rounds out the volume.

Stead strongly believes that interests motivate young students and that their interests can form the basis for their nonfiction writing. Their natural curiosity to know and learn about the sun, worms, and all sorts of things, provides a perfect framework for nonfiction writing. Writing nonfiction introduces students to the concepts of planning, researching, writing, revising, and publishing, important writing elements students need throughout their school career. Introducing these concepts to lower elementary students at an understandable level is what Stead's book is all about.

Aimed at classroom teachers, *Is That A Fact?*, is a practical, well-written guide for any teacher wanting to expand the writing curriculum into the arena of nonfiction. Its charts, graphs, photographs, sample assignments, and rubrics give teachers the concrete information needed to implement a nonfiction writing curriculum. The helpful appendices include a variety of forms and assignments sheets teachers can reproduce.

Highly Recommended.

Pages: **252** Price: **\$19.50** ISBN: **1571103317**

Reviewed by Stephanie Davis, Spring Arbor University



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