

REVIEW

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Language Arts is a journal about all areas of language teaching and learning. It is concerned with language teaching and learning in the pre-school and middle school years. It thus has much of interest to Primary School teachers.

The April issue of Language Arts is devoted to literature and literary discourse. Most of the articles concern teacher's experiences with children and their reading. There are also a few articles more directly concerned with reaching a more democratic methodology of teaching reading involving a child-centred approach, setting up study groups to provide in-service workshops about language teaching, and, lastly, some valuable book reviews.

In his introduction, editor, David Dillon, mentions that the "etymological root of 'story' is a Greek word meaning" a way to know" (pg. 327) and

this Journal views literary discourse as a way of knowing for children. The general articles in this Journal explore the idea of how literature can help the child to create meaning and to make sense of the world.

Much exciting material is presented. In her article Metaphor, Mind and Meaning: The Narrative Mind in Action, Jill Sunday Bartoli discusses how various scholars, philosophers and linguists have proposed that narrative reflects the mind. She therefore suggests that the way to help children with learning problems is through their stories. She talks of "the story as representative of how the child comes to terms with life: of the child's hope for a better life with change kept alive through fantasy" (Fathe, pg 333). Story telling and story making are a way for the child to make meaning, to symbolise reality.

Ms. Bartoli presents fascinating case studies as she shows how story telling can be used as an informal technique to assess children's language competence as well as emotional, intellectual and spiritual well being.

Another very interesting article is Smooth and Crumply: Children's Meaning Making with stories by David L. Miles. 'Smooth and crumply' is a child's description of how a story would have felt if she had touched it. Here is a sample of one of Miles' interesting comments: "Meaning is unquestionably a large and complex notion. It refers to making connections between the story and the individual's life experiences, to the opening up of new perspectives, to the re-ordering of the way one thinks or lives. Making meaning, then, refers to making sense from the story on a deep and personal level (pg. 344) Real life experiences of how a child does this follow.

A further idea from Miles' article worthy of contemplation is the value of re-reading stories to children allowing for long spaces of time between reading, - thus the 'meaning' of the story is assimilated and often deepens and changes.

Other interesting articles are those of June McConaghy who talks of her informal writing centre in class and Dorothy Marks' When Children Write Science Fiction.

I found this edition of Language Arts an interesting one. The experiences of teachers with children and literature are human stories and encouraging and often uplifting. The ideas of how teachers/adults can use literature to mediate and find out more about the individual child as well as help him/her to find meaning in the world are valuable and relevant.

Some of the section concerned with exploring ways of teaching better perhaps leave the reader a little in the air as they are often reports on proceedings, as in Ann Sher Bayer's On becoming teacher Experts' Learning through Interaction

Nevertheless, they present a picture of what a study group of in-service teachers could be like.

I would recommend this journal to teachers for both relaxing and exciting reading!

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