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The Literacy Lexicon

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BOOK REVIEW

Geoff Bull & Michele Anstey (Eds) (2002). *The Literacy Lexicon Second Edition*, Prentice Hall

This text is an update of the third volume in Anstey and Bull's trilogy of *The Literacy Landscape* and *The Literacy Labyrinth*. It is aimed at the advanced Teacher Education student moving into research, or the classroom teacher wanting an update on current issues in the literacy field.

Each of the sections; Foundations, Knowledge, Application and Implementation; provides a set of articles by, mostly, Australian literacy researchers at the forefront of their field. Current issues such as critical literacy, grammar as a teaching tool, multi-literacies and gender feature, as well as views on pedagogies in literacy, the reworking by Luke and Freebody of their "four roles" model, and classroom practices.

The new material includes Beverly Derewianka's chapter on "Making grammar relevant to students' lives" which examines the Systemic Functional Grammar of Halliday and others. The use of transcripts and their practical analysis provides meaningful and thought provoking approaches to grammar teaching in schools.

Peter Freebody and Allan Luke revisit their ground breaking "four roles" view of literacy practices and the responsive, growth and cultural heritage paradigms of literacy teaching. They provide an interesting view of how they see the model has been used, concluding "that it provides a platform for the dialectical tension that Desrosieres (1988) called for: between the durable practices of the present, and the need for a systematic way of 'reproblematising' these in the face of new conditions, contexts and phenomena."

Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel provide the essential (for a 21st century text) chapter on "Literacy, Culture and Technology", covering ICTs in classrooms ranging from oral retellings using Kidpix, to *The Simpsons*, slide shows and commercial uses through the Internet. The final "Reflection Question" considers 'the attention economy' and its implication for schools and literacy. A very relevant and pertinent point for all literacy teachers today.

New curriculum documents across Australia are forcing teachers to examine their approaches to teaching and Christine Edwards-Groves' chapter on explicit pedagogy is a timely exercise in examination of planning, implementation and reflection. The use of transcripts of classroom interactions provides practical examples of both effective and counter-productive teaching.

It seems almost impossible to discuss children's literature in an Australian text without introducing Maurice Saxby, and this new edition contains an interesting chapter by "the old master" covering the often neglected area of young adult fiction. He confronts the contentious issue of the "problem novel" with its recurring themes of 'abuse, rape, murder, madness' and highlights the need for discerning adults to promote thoughtful and critical reading among adolescents. He outlines the issues current in the genre and the differing needs and tastes of male and female readers. As an Australian critic he focuses on Australian authors and provides an excellent coverage of our best exponents of this genre, including Marsden, Winton and Wheatley.

The organisation of *The Literacy Lexicon* is an admirable example of “walking the talk” as each chapter is preceded by a graphic overview providing the reader with a ‘map’ for reading. The inclusion of a ‘Stimulus for Reflection’ section following each chapter gives the reader a chance to review and consolidate understandings and would be particularly effective in a Teacher Education setting.

Overall *The Literacy Lexicon (Second Edition)* is a useful and worthwhile text to grace the shelves of any reader interested in maintaining a current view of literacy education in Australia.

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