

8-2011

From the Editor

Allison L. Baer
Western Michigan University, allison.baer@wmich.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons



Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Baer, A. L. (2011). From the Editor. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 51 (2). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol51/iss2/2

This Editor's Note is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Education and Literacy Studies at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



From the Editor

Teaching is a dynamic, interesting experience filled with challenges and constant change. The field of literacy research and practice is much the same; there always seems to be something new on the horizon. Some new book, new reader, new thinking that spurs us to wonder and want to know more. Throughout history people have introduced the new and different to our field in some profound ways. John Dewey changed teaching by speaking of the “organic connection between education and personal experience” (Dewey, 1938, p. 25) and instructing us on those experiences that are educative and those that are not. Louise Rosenblatt changed the way we thought about reading when she warned us to never forget what the reader brings to any text, warning us that “the human element cannot be banished” (Rosenblatt, 1938/1983, p. 6). Paulo Freire admonished us to change our thinking about educating the oppressed when he said, “only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both” (Freire, 1968, p. 28). Sonia Nieto (1993) called for teachers to think differently about multicultural education when she challenged educators to be aware of and comfortable with their own ethnicity thus better understanding their students.

In the field of young adult literature, S. E. Hinton introduced us to Pony Boy and Johnny in 1965 and the phrase “stay golden” became part of the American vernacular. A mere 13 years ago, a young boy received an invitation that changed his (and our) life forever. Harry didn’t know what was waiting for him at Hogwarts nor did we, but many followed his journey with breathless anticipation. Those seven books changed the idea of young adult literature forever as people of all ages waited anxiously for each new book. Three years ago we were introduced to Katniss Everdeen who stepped forward to take her sister’s place in the Hunger Games. Once again, as with Harry Potter, readers found themselves enthralled by a world fraught with peril and unspeakable horrors.

Yes, our field is ever-changing. And isn’t it great to be a part of it?

This current issue of Reading Horizons brings us some new thoughts about ideas old and not-so-old. Jack Cassidy, the researcher behind the International Reading Association’s (IRA) “What’s Hot and What’s Not” lists for the last 14 years, and his colleague Evan Ortlieb analyzed the last ten years of lists and discuss how the field has changed. Topics such as phonics and fluency are receiving considerably less attention as common core standards and adolescent literacy are on the rise. This discussion



is fascinating as we see how the thinking of literacy researchers and practitioners has changed in the first decade of the millennium.

The position of the literacy specialist has changed as well as they are called upon to take more responsible positions of leaderships in our schools. Understanding this change, Shelley Wepner and Diana Quatroche researched how colleges and universities are preparing candidates to be that kind of leader. Having interviewed faculty in literacy graduate programs around the country, the authors found that successful programs require a course in leadership that has the candidates actively working with teachers in the field. In addition, the programs help develop the communication and collaboration skills of the future literacy coaches.

Some things, unfortunately, have not changed. Bullying is still an issue for far too many people as, even with the recent spate of hate crimes against the LGBT community and Muslims and national press condemning such behavior, bullying behavior is still all too present. In an attempt to make a change in early elementary classrooms, Emily Moulton and her colleagues analyzed how bullying is portrayed in children's picture books. The purpose of the analysis was to find those books that best portray how to effectively handle bullying situations. The authors admonish educators to use books in a form of bibliotherapy as they lead young readers through some well-written texts that model positive change in the bully thereby creating a safer environment.

One area that is constantly changing is our understanding of reading comprehension. The fact that reading is an invisible, mental activity can make instruction in comprehension even more difficult. Holly Diehl and her colleagues researched the effects of the Three-Phase Reading Comprehension Intervention (3-RCI) with students who had adequate decoding skills but struggled with reading comprehension. The researchers also analyzed the teachers' behavior finding that the interactive teaching style was more successful with enhancing young readers' comprehension than was the recitative style.

One thing that never changes is our need to find humor in life and laugh. Barbara Ward and Terry Young, our ever-changing literature experts, remind us of this as they share books that will make readers of all ages laugh out loud. There's something about a bulldog dressed up as a princess that makes the heart glad and many will delight in doing the Croaky Pokey with young readers. For a genuine belly laugh, read poetry about dogs and their need to drool, run, slobber, and fart in cars. And, just in



case you need to do some analysis of the funny, Ward and Young include a non-fiction book that includes interviews with experts on the subject.

Change is good and inevitable and it's coming to *Reading Horizons*, too. Starting with Volume 52, the journal will be completely online as we become a part of the Digital Commons community. All submissions will be handled through a central website which will hopefully make the process quicker and more simple. More information will be sent to subscribers in the near future so the transition is as seamless as possible.

Change is on the horizon. It's waiting for us in the very next minute and it will come whether we like it or not. Who knows what questions are being asked at this very moment and how our field will change as a result. One thing is certain, somewhere there is a person asking and finding. Somewhere there is an author creating a person, a world, a story that will transfix us and make us something new.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience & education*. New York: Touchstone.

Freire, P. (1968). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.

Nieto, S. (1992). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. New York: Longman.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1938/1983). *Literature as exploration*. New York: Modern Language Association.

Allison L. Baer, Ph.D.
Editor, *Reading Horizons*
Kalamazoo, MI

**There is no more crucial or basic skill
in all of education than reading.**

