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Professional Materials

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The Whole Language Journey. Written by Rebecca Harlin, Sara E. Lipa, and Rosemary Lonberger. Pippin Publishing Limited, 150 Telson Road, Markham Ontario. 1991. ISBN: 0-88751-034-5. Paperbound.

While it is the policy of *Reading Horizons* to only review the most current materials, the professional resource reviewed below is one title from the Pippin Publishing series we have featured in recent issues.

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For teachers looking for a short but informative introduction to whole language, *The Whole Language Journey* is a good choice. For those already familiar with whole language practice and theory, this text will provide some useful ideas and references. The authors begin by discussing the concept of whole language, pointing out that the roots of the movement are found in different theories of how we learn to read. Theories based in psycholinguistics, developmental and cognitive psychology, and sociolinguistics are discussed, showing how they fit into the whole picture of whole language.

In discussing ways to begin using whole language in the classroom the authors suggest not switching entirely to whole language practices at first, but rather gradually beginning to modify and adapt individual classrooms and school curricula

to include one or two whole language pieces. For example, teachers can begin with sustained silent reading — a time when everyone, including the teacher, reads uninterruptedly. Teachers may modify the basal program by including whole language practices such as introducing vocabulary as the need arises, rather than all at once in the beginning of a lesson. Other features of whole language which the authors discuss are cooperative learning, and flexible grouping based on children's interests and not on their reading ability.

One section of the book is devoted to methods of evaluation used in whole language classrooms. Whole language assessment, based on the belief that no two children are identical, uses measures to affirm that learning is actually happening in the classroom. Standardized testing is not condemned but the sole use of it to evaluate a child's learning is. Evaluation methods discussed include informal observations, interviews with children to glean knowledge of how they are learning, checklists to keep accurate records of what has been learned, and portfolios. Appendixes include samples of some of these evaluation methods, and a checklist for creating a whole language environment. A useful annotated bibliography, divided into whole language areas (writing, thematic units, etc.) contains some 30 references.

Throughout the book, the authors stress the importance of having support when beginning a whole language journey. They advise teachers who are beginning to use whole language to keep in touch with other teachers using whole language practices, to keep administrators well informed, and to read professional journals on whole language practice and theory. Especially important is the need for teachers to believe in themselves and their ability to create a good learning environment, using wonderful children's literature.