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REVIEWS: Professional Materials

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REVIEWS

Professional Materials

Food for thought: Reading and thinking critically.

Written by Esta De Fossard.

South-Western Publishing, 5101 Madison Rd., Cincinnati OH 45227.

1992. ISBN: 0-538-70412-8. 375 pp.

Reviewed by Jerry Phillips

University of Arkansas at Monticello

De Fossard offers the reading/language arts community a study manual designed to accomplish several objectives. First, it proposes to strengthen a student's ability to comprehend and recall; second, it delivers an introduction to clear and logical thinking; and third, it provides hands-on experiences in several elements of clear and logical thinking. This contribution is a comprehensive textbook-workbook designed to reach and assist two audiences. It is for students who already have well-developed language abilities, but for whatever reason are reluctant readers. An example of this audience might be a remedial reading class of secondary students who are experiencing difficulty in satisfying state literacy test requirements. It is also for adults who have practical knowledge of how to read and write, but desire to acquire more depth in a supervised environment; for example, adults enrolled in community or county-wide literacy courses who want to strengthen literacy abilities in order to pass a GED or civil service exam.

The text's introduction invites the student to work through an example of the lesson structure. There are nine additional lessons and each has a central topic. These topics include *Thinking about reading* and *Thinking about sports*. Each lesson is about twenty pages long and contains eight parts:

introduction, thinking skills, word study, article, consider the thinking, recall the details, summarize, and express yourself. In addition, each lesson contains three articles related to its topic. Each article is designed to strengthen students' skills in understanding and recalling what they have read. The articles provide the opportunity for engaging a particular thinking skill that will develop a student's ability to think more clearly and logically. Each lesson also contains a developmental chart that allows the student to record scores after completing each lesson. The scores are intended to indicate the student's reading and thinking skill progress and designate areas needing improvement.

From this reviewer's perspective, De Fossard has offered a useful workbook approach to critical reading and developing thinking skills. The student reads controversial material written with the intent to cultivate critical thinking and then is given the opportunity to express reactions through writing. It seems that this book is an appropriate vehicle to accomplish its objectives.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Alef-bet. Written by Michelle Edwards.

Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books
105 Madison Ave., New York NY 10016. 1992.
ISBN: 0-688-09725-1. 32 pp. US\$15.00

Both monolingual and bilingual children will learn from and be delighted by this charming family-oriented addition to the world of alphabet books. Author and illustrator Michelle Edwards provides an informative introduction to the Hebrew language and to the family she has created to illustrate letters, words and concepts:

The family in this book speaks Hebrew. They may know English, French, Spanish, or other languages, too. They may live in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, New York or Amsterdam. Almost anywhere in the world, there are Israelis and others who speak Hebrew as their daily language.

Although they are fictional, these characters have become my friends. Hannah is the ema, the mom. Matan is the abba, the dad. Then comes Uri (age 9), the oldest; Gabi (age 5); and little Lev, the toddler (almost 2).

Hannah is a children's-book writer like me, and Matan owns an art-supply store. Uri goes to school and is quite a good artist. He uses a wheelchair because he was born with spina bifida and can't move his legs. Gabi likes polka dots, dancing, make-believe, dressing up, and goofing around with Uri when he lets her. Lev likes his tire sandbox, stroller rides, kicking his feet at the moon, and goofing around with Uri and Gabi when they let him.

Our English language word *alphabet* is derived from a transliteration of the names of the first two letters in the Greek alphabet: *alpha* and *beta*. The corresponding letters in the Hebrew letter system are *alef* and *bet*, so the Hebrew alphabet is an *alef-bet*. (Hebrew, like Greek, uses a writing system which is different from English, necessitating the transliteration, or phonetic spelling of words, from those alphabet systems to our own.) To illustrate the consecutive letters *resh* (sounded like *r*) and *shin* (sounded like *sh*) the facing pages in this alef-bet book show a snow scene. On one page we see a mittened, booted, carrot-nosed snow figure gazed at by a tiny rabbit which has left tracks in the snow; Lev, the toddler, is warm in his blue snowsuit, the footprints from his small boots leading up to the spot where he has fallen back blissfully to make a pattern in the snow; footprints of Gabi's larger boots lead out of the picture. The word to illustrate *resh* is *feet* (rah-GLAH-yeem). On the facing page Uri and Gabi are sliding down hill on circular sleds; the word to illustrate *shin* is *snow* (SHEH-legg).

There is much here to learn and enjoy about language and about caring families, from the cover page showing Gabi hitching a ride on Uri's wheelchair, through the last page where Gabi holds up her own message to readers, written in English and Hebrew letters: *Shalom*. (JMJ)





**Stories to solve: Folktales from around the world;
More stories to solve: Fifteen folktales from
around the world.**

Told by George Shannon. Illustrated by Peter Sis.
Greenwillow Books, 105 Madison Ave., New York NY 10016. 1992.
ISBN: 0-688-09161-X. 64 pp. US\$12.95;
ISBN 0-688-10496-7. 55 pp. US\$3.95

Reviewed by Alisa M. Wilkins
Western Michigan University

Three women were mysteriously turned into rosebushes, identical in every way. One of the women was allowed to turn back into a woman from sunset to sunrise and visit her husband and child. How did the husband figure out which rosebush was his beloved wife, and thus free her from the spell? His dilemma is described in one of fourteen folktales, each presenting an unusual situation to be pondered by both a story character and the reader. Following each story puzzle is a "how it was done" page that explains how the problem was solved.

George Shannon's second collection of stories is dedicated "to all who smiled and asked for more." Now readers have, between the two books, 29 intriguing and informative puzzles. All of the problems are solvable; all require careful consideration of the clues and information and some visualization of the events. The stories are challenging and enjoyable, and the books could easily be used to sharpen problem-solving skills. Both books are sure to bring a smile to any face, and would be excellent additions to home, school, and public libraries.

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You'll Soon Grow Into Them, Titch.

Written by Pat Hutchins.

Mulberry Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019.
ISBN 0-688-11507-1. 1992. US\$4.95.***But Not Kate.***

Written by Marissa Moss.

Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New
York NY 10019. ISBN 0-688-10600-5. 1992. US\$14.00.Reviewed by Karen Welch
Western Michigan University

Titch is an adorable little boy who finds, over the course of several months, that he has grown out of some of his clothes. He is offered hand-me-downs from his sister and brother but can't wear them because they are too large. The response is always "You'll soon grow into them, Titch." Through all of this the very colorful illustrations tell the reader that much more is happening: the garden is growing, the tree is budding, the potted seeds are sprouting, the bird is nesting, and Titch's mother is preparing for a new baby. Titch's dad takes him shopping for new clothes and he presents the new baby with his old clothes along with the common refrain, "He'll soon grow into them." This is a delightful story to which children with siblings will be able to relate.

But Not Kate covers the span of one day at school. It starts out with little mice children getting off the bus with their special possessions. Everyone brought something, but not Kate. In the classroom everyone participated, but not Kate. In art class everyone knew what to paint, but not Kate. In the lunchroom everyone had some special dessert, but not Kate. Kate was not feeling very special even when the magician asked her to be his assistant at the special assembly. Then Kate made things happen with the magic words and magic wand. Flowers and rabbits came out of the hat and "a thousand stars" appeared on a scarf. Kate went home feeling very special and children will, too, after sharing this story. Children often share the same feelings that Kate felt and so they will be thrilled to see how Kate's day ends.