



REVIEWS

Professional Materials

Learning to read: The quest for meaning. Malcolm P. Douglass. 1989. Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Ave., New York NY 10027. ISBN: 0-8077-2970-1. Cloth. 176 pp. US\$22.95.

In this interesting and provocative work, Malcolm Douglass presents a multifaceted framework for conceptualizing the reading process. The framework he constructs has definite implications for the educational system as a whole, and, more importantly, strong recommendations for change in the traditional practices surrounding reading instruction.

The basic premise of this work presents two opposing views of how individuals best learn to read. The first view, labeled by the author the traditional view, presents reading as "a subject best learned through the study of component skills" (p. 15). Historically this traditional or conventional view has dominated classroom practice in the United States. The second view, the experiential or naturalistic position, holds that learning to read will best evolve as other language acquisition does, through exposure and practice in a natural setting in which constructing meaning is the goal.

Douglass builds support for the naturalistic approach by tying together threads from many perspectives. These

varying perspectives are included in chapters devoted to historical trends in reading, the roles of sensory input and language acquisition and learning theory.

The audience for this work, including educators, parents and anyone interested in the act of reading itself, is encouraged by the author to reflect upon his stated theoretical orientation and to evaluate what should appropriately constitute reading instruction. In a most readable and logical fashion the author certainly leaves no doubt to which philosophy he subscribes. (KW)

Books for Children

Galimoto. Written by Karen Lynn Williams; illustrated by Catherine Stock. 1990. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 105 Madison Ave., New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-08789-2. Hardcover. 32 pp. US\$13.95.

Galimoto begins with Kondi, a seven-year-old boy in an African village, examining his "box of things" — the kind of box that will be familiar to many seven-year-old boys. His box holds a knife, a "dancing man," and pieces of wire. Kondi's greatest wish for the day is to have enough wire to make a "galimoto," which is a type of hand-made wire toy children in his village play with. Kondi perseveres in his quest the entire morning, even in the face of derision from his older brother, and, much more intimidating, anger from other village members. By the afternoon, he has enough wire to make a pick-up truck as his galimoto.

In the evening, after his long and rewarding day, Kondi hears the other village children singing "let the moon be

bright, for us to play and sing tonight." Kondi proudly brings out his new toy, and the children play together.

Catherine Stock spent several weeks gathering impressions in the African country of Malawi, and her illustrations portray daily life of the village in muted, realistic colors. Karen L. Williams captures the definitive essence of an African village through the eyes of a child, but manages to make the story of Kondi and his toy a universal one. Kondi and his "galimoto" will be endearing to the hearts of young readers. (SC)

Holiday Series: Hanukkah, Passover, Halloween, Christmas, Easter. Written and illustrated by Miriam Nerlove. 1990. Albert Whitman & Co., 5747 W. Howard, Niles IL 60648. ISBN 0-8075-3143-X; 8-8075-6390-9; 8-8075-3131-6; 0-8075-1148-X; 0-8075-1871-9. Hardcover, 24 pp. US\$10.95 each.

Reading Horizons presents the comments of two reviewers who examined selected books in the series.

Review by Eloise Van Heest, Associate for Christian Education, Hope Church (Reformed Church in America), Holland MI.

Even though young children have experienced each of the annual holidays and holy days only a very few times, they realize that these are very special days. The stories in this series emphasize the simple, warm pleasures of families celebrating together and the loving relationships of children with parents, siblings and grandparents. Baking Christmas cut-out cookies, dyeing Easter eggs, and making Thanksgiving pies are some of the rich holiday traditions in which preschoolers share.

A particularly appropriate focus is on the children in the stories giving to others rather than only receiving from grownups. The excited anticipation and joy of sharing holiday meals with extended families is also depicted. The author balances the common "secular" customs such as Santa Claus and the Easter bunny with a straightforward and clear telling of the Christian stories of Christmas and Easter. Although some might resist the mixture, the presence of both aspects encourages further conversation between reader and young listener.

Review by Dvorah Heckelman, Hebrew Academy of the Capital District, Albany NY, and Union College, Schenectady NY.

These charming picture story books reflect careful thought and considerable talent on the part of the author Miriam Nerlove. The illustrations are delightful and were pleasing to a group of kindergartners who heard the stories read aloud.

While the language and content are appropriate to the young preschooler for whom the books were written, care was exercised to keep the facts accurate if incomplete. The author, bound by such concerns as rhyme, fact, historical authenticity, sexual equality, sensitivity to religious differences, politics, and a child's capacity to understand, must make accommodations. It appears that in making the necessary selections, rhyme was a primary dictator necessitating sometimes the sacrifice of good language or occasionally accuracy. For example, in the book of Passover, it was necessary to use the term "Seder Book" to rhyme with "look" instead of "HAGGADAH," the authentic name for the booklet used to tell the Passover story.

Notable and praiseworthy is the presence of several generations in the home, the father as cook, and the multi-racial approach in the series.

A young Jewish mother who was asked to read the books to her young children expressed disappointment that the HANUKKAH book states "Each night there are gifts." This, in fact, is not tradition and has been instituted by some families in an attempt to compete with Christmas. Since, in all other aspects, these books appropriately accept differences and avoid judgments, the author apparently has inadvertently accepted as custom a practice limited to some families and observed, in the reviewer's judgment, for the wrong reasons.

Of note also is the fact that the author has chosen not to mention Jerusalem or Israel in any of the books despite the fact that it was the locale for the history of Hanukkah and of Easter. In the light of current political interest in the Holyland, it is understandable. However, this territory is the geographical area from whence grew the three major Western religions. Were the world to recall our common origins we might better create a climate in which our young readers may find the wisdom to achieve peace and practice the love of humankind intended by our ancestors.

Materials reviewed are not endorsed by *Reading Horizons* or Western Michigan University. The content of the reviews reflects the opinion of the reviewers whose names or initials appear with the reviews.

To submit an item for potential review, send to Kathryn A. Welsch, Reviews Editor, *Reading Horizons*, Reading Center and Clinic, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008.