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## Reviews: Professional Materials/Books for Children

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# REVIEWS

## Professional materials

*Using Literature in the Elementary Classroom, revised edition.* John Warren Stewig and Sam Leaton Sebesta, editors. 1989. National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801. ISBN 0-8141-5618-5. Softcover. 132 pp. US\$ \$8.95.

*Reviewed by Kathryn Welsch,  
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan.*

The editors of this concise but densely-packed work note that the first edition of *Using Literature in the Elementary Classroom* (1978) stemmed from a concern with the fragmentation of reading into isolated skills and a commitment to integrating reading instruction across the curriculum. The stated purpose of this revised, enlarged edition is to help teachers implement the changes that will move elementary programs toward a literature based curriculum.

The collection of chapters contained in this volume range in topics from the nature of our language and the use of picture books in early reading experiences to a focus on development of visual literacy through book illustrations and creative drama in the classroom. All contributing authors have been practitioners in elementary classrooms, and the emphasis is on what works in the classroom to develop literacy through literature.

The authors take care to incorporate the latest research in support of their recommendations. Two chapters particularly complete in this area are *The Tradebook as an Instructional Tool* by Helen Felsenthal, describing her work on metacognition, and Richard Kolcynski's chapter *Reading Leads to Writing*.

Practical suggestions for implementation in the classroom are the core of these chapters. These suggestions are not a packaged set of activities, but rather starting points for teachers upon which to build a program.

Perhaps the most useful feature of this volume is the inclusion of three lists at the end of each chapter: Recommended Books for Classroom Use, References, and Related Readings. These three collections of references for teachers provide lists of materials and a complete program implementation outline for each chapter topic.

The underlying rationale for this work as well as the inclusion of practical suggestions and professional resources serve to make it a useful addition to a professional library.



*Adventuring With Books, 9th edition.* Mary-Jett Simpson, editor. 1989. National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801. ISBN 0-8141-0078-3. Softcover. 549 pp. US\$ 16.50.

*Reviewed by Jeanne M. Jacobson*

The most recent publication in NCTE's rotating series of booklists is this ninth edition of an annotated bibliography of approximately 1800 books published between 1985 and 1988, recommended for children from infancy through sixth grade. Selections are categorized by genre, content, subject area, and age-level of interest. In major categories a list of recommended books published before 1985 is also included.

A useful feature is the inclusion, with some content summaries, indicating study units and themes which the book would enhance. The final chapter provides descriptions of major book awards with chronological lists of past award-winning books. This is an invaluable resource for teachers and librarians.

## Books for children

*Addie's Dakota Winter, Losing Uncle Tim, and All About Asthma*

reviewed by Peggy Lee,

*Parchment Middle School, Parchment, Michigan*

*Addie's Dakota Winter*. Written by Laurie Lawlor; illustrated by Toby Gowing. 1989. Albert Whitman & Company, 5747 West Howard Street, Niles, Illinois 60648. ISBN: 0-8079-0171-9. Hardcover. 160 pp. US\$10.50.

*Addie's Dakota Winter* is set during the late 1800's, and is reminiscent of Laura Ingalls Wilder's well-known books about life on the prairie during that period. The story teaches the value of friendship between two people even when they come from different cultural backgrounds and countries.

In her new home, Addie experiences cruelty from school bullies, and the hardships of a terrible winter blizzard, but she is strong enough to befriend a boisterous Norwegian girl who is an even more recent newcomer to the prairie. This is an excellent book for children in the intermediate grades to read or have read to them. The story will assist them in understanding themselves, as well as people of different races, countries, and language backgrounds. Children might also enjoy another book by Lawlor, *Addie Across the Prairie*, which tells about Addie's first few months on the Dakota frontier.

*Losing Uncle Tim*. Written by Mary Kate Jordan; illustrated by Judith Friedman. 1989. Albert Whitman & Company, 5747 West Howard Street, Niles, Illinois 60648. ISBN: 0-8075-4756-5. Hardcover. 28 pp. US\$12.95.

Adults do not like to discuss death with children because they want to protect them from unnecessary pain, or they think that

children aren't experienced or old enough to understand death. Children's literature is one route to enable children to separate truths from fantasies about death and dying.

*Losing Uncle Tim* is a story about the death of a boy's favorite uncle from AIDS. Through this fictional account, children will read about how a young boy handles the dying and death of a close relative and also they will get factual information about the disease called AIDS.

The story does not dwell on the death of Daniel's Uncle Tim but tells about the good times they had together, such as the times they played together outdoors, the wooden ducks they sailed on the river, and the times they would wrap up in quilts and drink hot cider as they rocked back and forth with their toes pointing towards a fire in the old wood stove.

As the story progresses, Daniel's incorrect ideas about AIDS — such as his belief that you will catch the disease if you take care of a person who has it — are corrected. This book, suitable for children in the intermediate grades to read or hear read aloud, is one way to help alleviate children's fears about death and disease.

*All About Asthma*. Written by William and Vivian Ostrow; illustrated by Blanche Sims. 1989. Albert Whitman & Company, 5747 West Howard Street, Niles, Illinois 60648. ISBN: 0-8075-0276-6. Hardcover. 40 pp. US\$10.95.

Children's capacity to function zestfully in their environment typically depends on health and vigor. Some children lack this physical stamina because of ill health. *All About Asthma* describes a young boy's bouts with asthma, and explains, from a first-hand perspective, facts and fallacies about the problem.

The book includes a list of famous people who have suffered from asthma: Olympic star Jackie Joyner-Kersey, movie star

Elizabeth Taylor, former Vice-President Walter Mondale, Christopher Reeves (alias Superman), and former President Theodore Roosevelt.

This is an excellent book for the home or school library shelf, and would be a useful resource in pediatrician's offices. As the dedication page suggests, it may help in getting children with asthma "on the right road to breathing easier."

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*Princess Furball.* Written by Charlotte Huck; illustrated by Anita Lobel. 1989. Greenwillow Books, 105 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. ISBN 0-688-07837-0. Hardcover. 40 pp. US\$13.95.

*Reviewed by Jeanne M. Jacobson*

In retirement, Charlotte Huck has turned from teaching and writing about children's literature, to the retelling of classic tales. Her version of the story of the motherless princess whose father seeks to sell her in marriage to a wealthy ogre, and who uses her wit and energy to escape first into cruel hardship, then into a happy-ever-after future as queen and mother, is wholly elegant.

Huck knows the questions children will ask — But who took care of the princess when she was a baby? How did a princess learn to make soup? — and she has built the answers into her story. Human sadness and human joy are interwoven here, even in the beautiful dedication: "In memory of Ginny, who loved this tale as much as her twin sister does."

Anita Lobel's drawings are a magnificent parallel telling of the story, which can themselves be "read" again and again, from the bleak frontispiece of a burial scene to the concluding family portrait in which carved images reminiscent of mother and nurse appear as part of the frame. This book is a treasure.