Exploring Student Response to Contemporary Picturebooks.
Sylvia Pantaleo.
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In contrast to concerns about the negative effect new technologies may have on literacy, Sylvia Pantaleo's academic text *Exploring Student Response to Contemporary Picturebooks* optimistically reassures readers that multimodal media such as picturebooks, specifically those developed in our contemporary digital world and that employ Radical Change characteristics and metafictive devices, have much to teach elementary-aged children. Pantaleo's extensive data, collected with children in grades 1 and 5 over a period of four years, is skillfully reduced, analyzed, and offered as evidence for points the author wishes to make about the educational significance of employing literature such as the titles used in her research in classrooms.

Radical Change, referenced to Eliza Dresang, is a theory coined and defined by Dresang and McClelland in the early 1990s (Dresang, 1999). Through the framework of Radical Change, readers are drawn to consider patterns of connectivity, interactivity, and access in modern children's literature that are emerging at a time when postmodern concerns imply post-literacy to some people. In contrast, Dresang offers that the "radically changed literacy" that is emerging in terms of altered forms and formats as well as changing perspectives may be even more complex and rewarding than past forms of literacy, a theory substantiated by Pantaleo in her classroom research for *Exploring Student Response to Contemporary Picturebooks.*

In addition to a consideration of aspects of Radical Change, Pantaleo also considers metafictive devices that draw readers to consider how texts work. She reminds us that metafiction (Waugh, 1984) systematically announces to readers its status as an artefact, thereby distancing readers and demanding a more active role in interpretation. Pantaleo identifies that although Radical Change characteristics and metafiction are described in terms of literary theory, neither has had a great deal of attention in terms of classroom research.

Visits to each of two grade 1 classrooms in Ontario and British Columbia and visits to each of two grade 5 classrooms in British Columbia took place consecutively over four years, with Pantaleo completing the data collection at one site before moving to the next. The cultural backgrounds, language preference and proficiency, gender, and socioeconomic status of the individual students were considered alongside the data that were produced by the study.

In the grade 1 research, the researcher and small groups of children studied particular picturebooks before whole-classroom rereading and discussion. Small-group sessions and whole-class interactive read-aloud sessions were audiorecorded and transcribed, and students were invited to follow up through writing activities as well as drama or visual art. Following the comple-

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tion of the study, children were interviewed to ascertain favorite picturebooks from the collection as well as their opinions on the small-group work.

The design of the study with the grade 5 students involved independent reading, journal-writing, and peer-led small-group discussions, as well as teacher-led whole-class discussions and poster-making. A culminating activity for the students entailed writing their own stories with Radical Change characteristics and completing an end-of-study questionnaire. Three individual interviews were completed with each student, and all discussions and interviews were audiorecorded and transcribed.

Inductive as well as deductive methods of data analysis were used for transcripts, researchers' and teachers' field notes, and photocopies of students' writing and art work. Reduction of data is one aspect of this study that is particularly impressive, and numerous key examples of students' talk are included in Pantaleo's chapters.

Implications from this research are rich, although textually embedded in discussions that combine, among other things, an examination of trends in book composition and contrasting recommendations in British Columbia's provincial curriculum, positive connections students made with the books in the study, and students' dexterity with skillful interpretation of texts with Radical Change and metafictive characteristics. In addition, because of the design of the study, there is no clear path on which teachers might replicate Pantaleo's interactions with students using the target books. Although I recommend Pantaleo's book for researchers interested in the topics and methods she embraces, I would not consider the text of primary interest to teachers, although the book lists in Appendixes B and C might be helpful in locating a modicum of classroom resources.

The message of Pantaleo's research applied to curriculum development is pertinent for educators, and I hope that the author will more concisely derive information from her studies to shape future articles for this target audience. Pantaleo's evaluation of curriculum indicates a discrepancy between curricula and students' knowledge that is too important to ignore. Provincial curricula must reflect students who are already well versed in technological expertise; such curricula are responsible for offering nonrestrictive classroom designs and fair, more open-ended assessment schemes. Another of Pantaleo's key points is that texts with Radical Change characteristics often demand the same skills required for Web literacy: a provocative idea that invites further study and also a strong argument for educators who wish to convince administration of the need to purchase more and particular types of books.

References

Dresang, E.T. (1999). *Radical Change: Books for youth in a digital age.* New York: H.W. Wilson.
Waugh, P. (1984). *Metafiction: The theory and practice of self-conscious fiction*. New York: Methuen.