

Comprehension and meaning, as presented in Chapter 4, draw on the general theory presented in Chapter 3. Figures 4.1 (p. 78) and 4.2 (p. 80) are illustrative of mental models and meaning and set the stage for a fuller understanding of meaning and comprehension.

Chapter 5 discusses the relationship of semantic and episodic memory to literacy. This chapter is related to Chapter 4 for there is "no meaning or comprehension without memory" (p. 91). Chapter 5, like other chapters in this book, includes a wealth of references.

Chapter 6 explains the direct relationship of DCT to the reading process. Bottom-up and top-down aspects of the reading process are discussed in depth. In addition, a comparison of DCT to other theories is provided here.

Chapter 7 explains the process of composing in terms of DCT. The section entitled "Composing a Brief Note" is illustrative of the potential that DCT holds for development of classroom techniques and materials. As in other chapters, references and comparisons to additional theories are summarized.

Chapter 8 reviews the implications of 30 years of research on contemporary reading and composition as related to DCT. This chapter offers an excellent opportunity for the reader to review other studies to determine if the theory will remain consistent. I believe it will.

Sadoski and Paivio have provided the profession with a theory and, more important, a text that should be applauded for its clarity and substance.

REFERENCES

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Teaching Phonics & Word Study in the Intermediate Grades

Wiley Blevins. 2001. Scholastic Professional Books (555 Broadway, New York, NY 10012-3299, USA). 320 pp. ISBN 0-439-16352-8. Softcover. US\$19.95.

Reviewed by R. Jeffrey Cantrell, The University of Virginia's College at Wise, Wise, Virginia, USA.

Readers of this review may wonder why and how someone might write a book about phonics for older students. Are not phonics supposed to be taught just in the primary grades when children are learning to read? Not if one acknowledges what phonics is; simply put, phonics is a description of the relationship between sounds and the letters (or spelling patterns) that represent those sounds. Wiley Blevins has written a text that extends the definition of phonics to include the more complex vowel and syllabication spelling patterns found in words in intermediate grade texts.

As the title implies, *Teaching Phonics & Word Study in the Intermediate Grades* is intended as a guide and sourcebook for teachers. Blevins has successfully written a text that will let teachers assist their students to build on their primary-grade skills and improve their "advanced phonics" skills (as Blevins calls them). The goal of *Teaching Phonics* is to provide teachers with instructional guidelines, step-by-step sample lessons, and extensive word lists that will help students explore

advanced phonics and "gain insights into our fascinating language, get excited about words, and become fluent readers" (p. 6). While Blevins devotes Section 5 of *Teaching Phonics* explicitly to the issue of fluency, it remains a guiding instructional theme throughout the text.

Blevins makes a clear and cogent argument for the role of direct phonics instruction in helping students become fluent readers. He explains how phonics instruction helps students map sounds onto spelling patterns, which enables them to decode words. As students learn to decode, their word recognition abilities improve. *Automaticity* is the term commonly used to describe the ability to recognize words accurately and quickly. Students become fluent readers when they develop automaticity with a large number of words. According to Blevins (and consistent with automatic information processing theory), "reading fluency improves reading comprehension, and since children are no longer struggling with decoding words, they can devote their full attention (mental energies) to making meaning from the text" (p. 9).

Blevins succeeds with *Teaching Phonics* in providing intermediate-grade teachers with many pedagogical tools that will enable them to help their students explore the complex spelling patterns found in English orthography. The text contains several unique and practical features that teachers should find useful. *Teaching Phonics* has six sections, an appendix of six quick word-identification assessments, and a glossary of phonics terms. I will discuss certain sections that I found particularly useful.

Blevins offers a simple and clear explanation of what teachers should know about linguistics in Section 2. He discusses the articulatory features of consonants and vowels and some of the more common and reliable consonant and vowel generalizations or "rules." While his charts

of linguistic information are well organized and accurate, I think that his instructional advice to teachers about these generalizations may be more helpful than the charts. For example, he emphasizes that it is not necessary to teach students these generalizations, but simply to "point them out at appropriate moments to help students clarify and organize their understanding of English spelling patterns" (p. 29).

Section 4, entitled "Creating Lessons for Success," is the longest section of the text and the most practical. Blevins offers step-by-step sample lesson plans for teaching students about specific phonics principles. He begins this section with lists of phonics lessons do's and don'ts. Throughout the remainder of Section 4, Blevins follows a format of providing guidelines or cautions for teaching a specific sound-letter pattern (phonic principle), which is then followed by a sample lesson on that specific principle. After each sample lesson, Blevins gives extremely well-organized and generous lists of words that teachers can use to develop other lessons for related phonics features. For example, Blevins offers a lesson on the long-vowel patterns of *ea* (as in *bean*) and *ee* (as in *feet*), and then provides lists of single-syllable and polysyllabic words containing other long-vowel patterns that teachers and students can use to explore how spelling patterns represent sounds as well as meaning within words.

The sample lessons in Section 4 span a wide range of simple to complex and abstract spelling patterns (or principles). Included in this section are lessons and lists of words containing consonant clusters, which include various blends and digraphs. Also included in this section are lessons and lists of many different short- and long-vowel phonograms found within single-syllable words as well as within polysyllabic words. Sample lessons and word lists con-

taining complex spelling features such as open and closed syllables, affixes, and Greek and Latin roots can also be found. The word lists of numerous Greek and Latin roots are especially well organized. Section 4 ends with a list of quick and easy phonics and word analysis games.

Blevins organizes Section 4 around a sensible scope and sequence of phonics patterns and principles. While Blevins hints that phonics should be taught in a developmentally appropriate way, he does not address as directly and explicitly as he could have the importance of timing in teaching students about specific phonics patterns or features (Invernizzi, Abouzeid, & Gill, 1994; Johnston, 1999).

Blevins's writing is straightforward and readable, and readers will appreciate his informed and balanced views on incorporating the teaching of phonics and word study into intermediate-grade classrooms. Blevins also weaves in some intriguing research-based linguistic observations and facts about words and word parts; his observations relate to the utility of studying certain phonic principles before others because of the prevalence or consistency of these principles. For example, he notes that only 13 words account for over 25% of the volume of printed English. Another example relates to the predictability of various vowel digraphs representing specific sounds; for example, the *ai* digraph represents the long-*a* sound as in *pain* 74% of the time.

In sum, Blevins accomplishes what he sets out to do; the text is a unique contribution to the professional literature in reading education in that it encourages and guides intermediate-grade teachers to help their students improve their advanced phonics knowledge and skills. Blevins dedicated *Teaching Phonics* to the late Jeanne Chall, whom Blevins recognizes as having had a great influence on his work. I

believe that Chall would have been proud of the text that Blevins has given us, so that we might extend the teaching of phonics and word study into the intermediate grades.

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- Invernizzi, M., Abouzeid, M., & Gill, J.T. (1994). Using students' invented spellings as a guide for spelling instruction that emphasizes word study. *The Elementary School Journal*, 95, 155-167.
- Johnston, F. (1999). The timing and teaching of word families. *The Reading Teacher*, 53, 64-75.

Classroom materials

Recasting the Past: The Middle Ages in Young Adult Literature

Rebecca Barnhouse. 2000. Boynton/Cook Publishers (361 Hanover Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801-3912, USA). 103 pp. Softcover. ISBN 0-86709-470-2. US\$15.00.

Reviewed by Jeanne M. McGlenn, University of North Carolina at Asheville, Asheville, North Carolina, USA.

Why read an imaginative story about a historical time when you can more readily read the history? What are the advantages to reading historical fiction over nonfiction history texts? Responses to questions like these usually revolve around the power of story to bring events to life in memorable ways. Young adults who read historical fiction often come away with a greater sense of the people who lived through the events and made choices with important consequences. They gain a sense of the complexity and ambiguity of events. But teachers choosing historical