

about the powerful influence of video games, I would love to hear his opinions on this issue.

Overall, this book is invaluable to educators. Even if you aren't a player of video games, there's no denying the importance of these learning principles in today's digital world. And, if you're not a game player when you begin reading this book, chances are you'll be curious enough to have a young person give you a few lessons when you're through!

James Paul Gee. 2003. New York: Palgrave. 240 pp. ISBN 1-4039-6169-7. US\$26.95.

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Classroom materials

Jeanne McGlinn

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Materials for review should be sent to Jeanne McGlinn, University of North Carolina–Asheville, One University Heights, Asheville, NC 28804, USA. Comments about the column may be sent to jmcglinn@unca.edu.

Read-Alouds and Performance Reading: A Handbook of Activities for the Middle School Classroom

Reviewed by Deborah M. Dean, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, USA.

Interest in reading can decrease as students move through school (Wilhelm, 2001). Christine Moen clearly wants to reverse this trend. She quotes Charlotte Huck on the dedication page to identify the goal of her book: "If we teach a child to read, yet develop not the taste for reading, all of our teaching is for naught." To help teachers develop students' taste for reading, Moen has written a short, fast-paced book. However, teachers should not be deceived by its length or readability: This book is packed with good ideas teachers can use in a variety of ways, and although the title indicates that the ideas are designed for middle

school classrooms, most are adaptable for students of all ages.

To begin, Moen makes clear the difference between performance readings, which are student centered, and read-alouds, which are teacher centered. Three chapters of the book address performance reading, which she describes as "teacher-modeled" but with "students performing pieces of literature through oral interpretation" (p. ix). The three types of performance reading developed are Readers Theatre, Performance Poetry, and Storytelling; all work to engage and motivate students to read with independence and for pleasure. In the three chapters devoted to read-alouds, Moen addresses the types of texts teachers can use for these routines—novels, short stories, short pieces, nonfiction, and picture books—as well as strategies for how to make these effective for students, from adding music through adequate preparation to physical requirements. From her perspective, "teacher read-alouds give students opportunities to make connections between the text and their first-hand

experiences, their world knowledge, and their connection to other texts they've read" (p. 107). Again, the goal is to engage and motivate.

Moen supports her ideas with research. The entire first chapter is devoted to general research that confirms the value of read-alouds and performance reading. Each chapter then begins with a brief rationale and an overview of additional research directly addressing the specific topic of the chapter. To round out the research component, each chapter ends with a list of titles that could be used for the activities and more references for teachers to use if they wish to follow up on the research. Key to Moen's rationale is how motivational such activities can be. She cites research to substantiate her claim, but I have to add a personal anecdote also in support of it. At the recent International Reading Association Convention in Reno, Nevada, I attended a session where Avi, Sharon Creech, Deborah Ellis, and Walter Dean Myers performed Readers Theatre versions of their texts. In the question session after the outstanding performance, the authors all indicated how much fun it had been. Myers noted how it introduced him to the others' books: "I *have* to get these other books," he said. Avi, when asked why teachers should use Readers Theatre, responded that it was fun—and that he didn't need any other reason. Certainly, these authors' experiences confirm what Moen's research establishes: These types of reading activities can be fun as well as instructive.

Throughout the book, Moen makes several key points about the use of read-alouds and performance reading in classes. First, she believes that they should be used daily. If they are not, students might see them as fillers and unimportant to the instruction of the class. Next, she emphasizes that using read-alouds and performance readings effectively requires planning and purposeful thinking. She provides planning sheets and cataloging ideas throughout the chapters to help teachers with this important preparation. Finally, she makes it clear that teachers can and should assess read-alouds and performance read-

ing. To aid in this assessment, Moen provides rubrics teachers can use or adapt for student performances of Readers Theatre (p. 21), poetry (p. 32), and storytelling (p. 43).

The strategies suggested in this book are clearly effective for actual implementation. As a teacher herself, Moen knows what happens in real classrooms with real teachers and students, and she addresses these issues in her book. In discussing the use of picture books, for example, she acknowledges the fact that, although "the photographs of elementary students gathered on the floor around a teacher sitting in a chair while she or he shows the pages while reading a picture book are endearing...they are not images possible in most middle school classrooms" (p. 51). Instead, Moen provides suggestions that consider real classroom contexts, and she confronts the primary challenge all teachers face: finding time for something else, given the already full curriculum complicated by testing and standards. Her response is to work within those constraints. "We must adopt classroom practices that are broad enough to connect with all learners in our classroom yet narrow enough to positively affect students' skills and strategies as well as their achievement on assessment tests" (p. 2). In this book, Moen builds a credible case for the way these strategies can address a wide variety of concerns.

In addition to the practical suggestions for using her ideas, Moen provides tools to help teachers implement the ideas she presents. In most chapters she includes instructions for planning as well as sample handouts. One handout shows how students can work through scene selection for Readers Theatre. Others include log sheets for poetry or short stories and checklists for students to use in preparing for performance poetry or storytelling. She also includes handouts that help students focus and make connections during read-alouds and handouts that correspond to her suggestions, such as "Cover-to-Cover Read, Respond, and Connect" (p. 77) and "AlphaFacts" (p. 79), two strategies she provides for students to use in connection with nonfiction

read-alouds. Although Moen provides some examples of student-completed handouts, I wished a couple of times for more of these because they helped clarify her explanations for me.

In all, Moen's ideas promote what she calls "affective literacy education" (p. 96). Central to her book is her desire for students to enjoy reading and to become more actively involved with it so that they'll become lifelong readers. The strategies she describes make this a reachable goal. As she states, "With purpose, preparation, and planning, you can establish read-aloud and performance reading routines in your classroom that will motivate your students and improve their reading skills" (p. xi). If you use her ideas, I would bet money on your success.

Christine Boardman Moen. 2004. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon. 113 pp. ISBN 1-929024-74-6. US\$18.95.

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Reading Aloud and Beyond: Fostering the Intellectual Life With Older Readers

Reviewed by Deborah Norland, Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, USA.

Modifying the aphorism "one should not judge a book by its cover" to "one should not predict the contents of a book by its title" adequately prepares readers for disappointment in *Reading Aloud and Beyond: Fostering the Intellectual Life With Older Readers*, by Frank Serafini and Cyndi Giorgis. While the authors claim to focus on reading aloud with students in the upper elementary and middle school grades, the contents contradict their assertion. Structurally, the book resembles an abridged textbook on children's literature with chapters on reading aloud, the art of picture books, and teaching strategies.

According to the authors, "the read aloud experience is the foundation for the language arts and content area curriculum" (p. 1) because it is a shared experience that connects teachers to students engaged with texts in a social context. Although they say, "It is our hope that every student will be engaged in every story we read aloud" (p. 5), they don't talk specifically about older readers except to point out that although

reading aloud with older readers may be common knowledge in some corners of the teaching profession... many classroom teachers need to articulate their reasons for doing so and offer research studies to support their decision to spend valuable time reading aloud with children. (p. 5)

Instead, the authors list 13 scientifically based reasons why teachers should read aloud to older students. Reading aloud increases test scores; introduces readers to new titles, authors, illustrators, genres, and text structures; builds a sense of community; and provides opportunities for extended discussions. Reading aloud with older readers is pleasurable, connects readers with content area subjects, demonstrates response strategies, increases readers' interest in independent reading, provides access to books that readers may not be able to experience on their own, provides demonstrations of oral reading and fluency, helps readers understand the connection between reading in school and reading in life, provides demonstrations of quality writing, and supports readers' development. The list reflects the authors' theoretical framework, but the ideas are not always substantiated by scientifically based research pertinent to *older* readers.

The same is true when Serafini and Giorgis discuss how readers and teachers learn to construct meaning from picture books. They focus on four elements of design: line, color, space, and texture, offering examples of each element and a nominal list of books with illustrations. Then they go on to describe perspective, composition, and a wide variety of techniques, from watercolor and pastels to collage and digital computer

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