
This title in the SLA series of professional publications embraces a comfortable and supportive text based on established defined terms, a clear delineation of the parameters and practical suggestions for implementation of reading programmes. For teachers and teacher librarians it outlines a familiar environment, followed by discourse on the nature and methodology of the action of reading, pedagogical frameworks and techniques for developing independent readers and a short chapter on reading resources. Though this title is British in focus, the approach will be familiar territory for teachers and teacher librarians elsewhere, and even the resources chapter is a discussion of generic resources which would apply in any Western teaching environment.

With a focus on creating readers, the intention of the title is to consider the process of becoming a reader, to analyse current practice in literacy teaching, to challenge assumptions about teaching reading and to stimulate collegial discussion. It is an inclusive text with frequent interspersion of questions to develop a line of reasoning and consideration. The chapter on the making of a reader has the dual approach of examining the process of reading, including the making of meaning, the purposes of literacy and the application of reading skills, while the other side of the issue covers child development and learning theory, the sequence of reading development and a range of pedagogical methods for teaching reading. This chapter covers a large body of knowledge in a succinct, summarised form that reminds the reader of the framework within which the reading process must operate.

The chapter on how children learn to read is not dogmatic but presents a very readable, supportive, summarised sequence of steps experienced by young readers with a qualifying statement that these are only guidelines and not definitive stages. The text offers suggestions regarding methods with a consideration of the concept of reading itself and a short debate between the function of ‘graded readers’ for practice and testing and more random reading focussing on fun. This debate has raged for decades and is still alive and well. The following chapter moves from the academic to the very practical skills involved in teaching: there are suggestions for an optimal reading environment, a range of opportunities for reading which should be provided, suggestions for creative and supportive teaching techniques and a strong affirmation of the importance of reading aloud to children.

Some chapters offer one or two websites, but most references are at the end of the whole text. Appendices offer suggestions for series books for young independent readers and a session plan for listening to young readers reading aloud. This book does not break new ground, but it is a short, supportive
summary which reminds teachers and teacher librarians of the skills involved in the craft of reading.

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