Exploring Children's Literature: Teaching the Language and Reading of Fiction

Books Reviewed:
Exploring Children's Literature: Teaching the Language and Reading of Fiction [1]

Issue: 138 [2]
Reviewer: Adrian Jackson [3]

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BfK Rating: 3

A manual which sets out to answer the question - what do teachers need to know about children's literature? - through a mix of well-informed and wide-ranging material supported by tasks which attempt to create active involvement: 'read this and comment', 'build up a collection of picture books', 'read the The Dark is Rising'. It is up-to-date in the books referred to and in the range of issues covered - 'fairly comprehensive' as the writers themselves put it. The liveliest sections tend to be the earlier ones with lots of useful examples and comment on extracts - talking and thinking about books led by knowledgeable enthusiasts. It must be great to work with these authors directly, but indirectly and trying to pack everything in has a cost. As with the teaching of the NLS Framework (for which this book seems designed) there is a temptation to provide coverage conscientiously hoping for a greater sum than the parts. It is hard to believe that the couple of pages per item of language feature, such as 'lexical ties' for instance, will do very much for the understanding of language at work. That method, repeated in the classroom, leaves children Naming Parts but not hearing and seeing the 'eloquent gestures'. Certainly not what these experienced practitioners would want from their own efforts in creating this book. There may be different answers to the initial question.

Running Order: 94

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