

Fifth Edition

CONTENT AREA READING



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To Simon,
Who has Good Things to Do, this one's for you.

May the sun warm you always and brighten each day, but if it rains as it must every now and then, you'll have the lives that you've touched, your family and friends.

So remember Pooh, and Piglet, too, and when the rain gets heavy and the waters high, just wonder what Christopher Robin would do:

It went on raining, and every day the water got a little higher, until now it was nearly up to Piglet's window . . . and still he hadn't done anything.

"There's Pooh," he thought to himself. "Pooh hasn't much Brain, but he never comes to any harm. He does silly things and they turn out right. There's Owl. Owl hasn't exactly got Brain, but he Knows Things. He would know the Right Thing to Do when Surrounded by Water. There's Rabbit. He hasn't Learnt in Books, but he can always Think of a Clever Plan. There's Kanga. She isn't Clever, Kanga isn't, but she would be so anxious about Roo that she would do a Good Thing to Do without thinking about it. And then there's Eeyore. And Eeyore is so miserable anyhow that he wouldn't mind about this. But I wonder what Christopher Robin would do?"

—FROM A. A. MILNE, *Winnie-the-Pooh*

Preface

Fifteen years after we first wrote *Content Area Reading*, we find ourselves still at it—writing, rewriting, rethinking, and fine-tuning a vision of learning and teaching with texts. We're told that the sign of a good book, one that has staying power, is that it's never finished saying what it has to say. We'll let you judge for yourself whether this is a good book or not, one that meets your professional needs, but when we compare the first edition to the present one, we're both delighted and surprised by how much the book has changed while still maintaining its core beliefs and assumptions. What began as a modest attempt to show how reading can become a workable and sensible part of content area learning and teaching has expanded into an ambitious exploration of content literacy—the ability to use reading, writing, talking, and listening processes to learn subject matter across the curriculum.

Engaging in a revision of a textbook is often as challenging as writing a book from scratch. Throughout the rethinking process, we were faced with tactical decisions: What should be deleted from the previous edition? What should be deemphasized or expanded upon? What should be added to reflect the changing nature of learners, teachers, and texts in today's content classrooms? The knowledge base related to content literacy and learning has changed dramatically in the past fifteen years, and so has thinking about what constitutes best practice in learning with text across the curriculum. Nevertheless, in making decisions related to changes in this edition, we followed the same functional criteria that guided the writing of the first edition fifteen years ago. *Workable* and *sensible* remain the key criteria of this edition. Influenced by the role that language, cognition, culture, and social context plays in literate processes such as reading and writing to learn, the goal of this edition is as true as it was fifteen years ago: to inspire teachers, whether novice or veteran, to examine their instructional strategies and practices in light of what is known about the powerful bond that exists between language and learning.

Language (and its many uses) is the predominant tool by which teachers, students, and authors communicate with one another. Yet it's easy to lose sight of, or to underestimate, the role that language plays in classroom learning. Talk is at the heart of classroom communication and has the potential to shape students' thinking and learning in powerful ways. While verbal interactions between teacher and students and between students and other students serve learning well, the role of language in classroom life involves more than talking and listening. In this edition, we emphasize the interrelatedness of reading, writing, talking, and listening in classroom learning situations.

Texts, whether written by authors who are strangers to students or by students themselves, are pivotal tools in the development of strategic independent learners. Yet texts often remain silent and neglected in content area classrooms. The reality of text use in content areas is that many students, for reasons that we explore in this book, are disengaged from the process of learning with texts in their classrooms. Yet caring and knowledgeable teachers can make a difference in the way students use texts to learn. In this book, we explore how to create active learning environments in which students—alone and in collaboration with one another—know how, when, and why to use all modes of language to learn with texts.

Underlying our beliefs about content literacy and learning is the idea that students learn with texts, not necessarily from texts. Learning from texts suggests that a text is a body of information to be mastered by readers rather than a tool by which readers construct meaning. Learning with a text underscores the transaction that takes place between reader and text rather than the transmission of knowledge from one party (the text) to another (the reader). Learning with texts implies that students have much to contribute to their own learning as they interact with texts to make meaning and construct knowledge. Active, engaged learners are strategic in their interactions with a text; they know how to search for meaning in everything they talk about and listen to and read and write about. Engaged readers also know how to use what they know about a subject to make sense of what they are reading and learning about. Furthermore, when students are engaged with texts, they aren't ambivalent about reading or their own reading processes. They're confident and competent with texts.

This edition retains all of the features of the previous edition while making improvements in its organization and overall coverage of teaching and learning strategies; strategic learning; collaborative and cooperative grouping practices; the role that prior knowledge plays in comprehension and learning; learning with literature and technology; talking about texts; writing to learn; and instructional scaffolding before, during, and after reading represent major threads that are woven throughout the book.

One of the main changes in this edition of *Content Area Reading* is the addition of two new chapters. One of these chapters examines student diversity in content area classrooms. Teaching with texts is all the more challenging in today's classroom, where the range of academic, linguistic, and cultural diversity has been increasing steadily since the 1960s. Traditional approaches to content area instruction aren't reaching diverse learners in ways that support their acade-

mic development. Even though students today exhibit differences in academic achievement and come in all languages and cultures, a “one size fits all” instructional mentality has pervaded content area classrooms. Instructional practices that involve mostly lecture and recitation often result in passive learning and nonparticipation by students. “Assign and tell” practices aren’t working well with students of diverse backgrounds, nor have they worked well with mainstream students, because neither are they culturally responsive nor do they meet students’ academic needs. Teachers, we argue, will reach diverse learners when they create classroom environments that revolve around strategic learning, discussion about texts, and cooperative learning activities.

A second new chapter in this edition explores how teachers grow professionally through a process of self-reflection and inquiry-based professional development. Many teachers find themselves in a process of change and transition as they reconsider instructional beliefs and practices related to literacy and learning. They are eschewing traditional approaches to text-related instruction in favor of strategies that reach all learners in ways that support content literacy in their classrooms. Reflective teachers who inquire into what they do, how they do it, and why they do it are finding that they are more likely to take risks and experiment with the kinds of instructional alternatives described in this book.

The fifth edition of *Content Area Reading* is divided into three parts. Part I, “Learners and Texts,” explores the relationships between teaching and learning with texts, student diversity, the use of authentic texts through literature and technology, and the role that lessons and thematic units play in bringing learners and texts together. Part II, “Instructional Alternatives,” offers a multitude of practical theory-based teaching strategies that scaffold instruction in ways that guide and support content literacy and learning. Part III, “Assessment and Reflection,” focuses on students and teachers as we examine ways in which teachers can make authentic assessments of student learning, particularly through the use of portfolios, as well as engage in examining their own beliefs and practices related to content literacy instruction.

Each chapter begins with a quotation, to help the reader reflect on the theme of the chapter; an organizing principle; a chapter overview, in which the relationships among important ideas are graphically depicted; and a set of questions that serve as a frame of reference. At a glance, the organizing principles capture the major themes of this edition:

1. Teachers play a critical role in helping students learn with texts.
2. Responding to classroom diversity involves scaffolding instruction in ways that (a) make students aware of and competent with learning strategies, (b) encourage talking about texts, and (c) engage students in cooperative learning.
3. Reading beyond the textbook, through the use of authentic texts in literature and technology, extends and enriches the curriculum.
4. Bringing students and texts together involves planning active classroom environments that engage students in content literacy and learning.

5. To teach words well means giving students multiple opportunities to learn how words are conceptually related in the texts they are reading and studying.
6. Piquing interest in and raising expectations about the meaning of texts create a context in which students will read with purpose and anticipation.
7. Teachers support and guide reader-text interactions through the instructional frameworks they create.
8. The more teachers know about text organization, the more likely they are to support students' efforts to comprehend and remember ideas and information.
9. Writing facilitates learning by helping students to explore, clarify, and think deeply about the ideas and concepts they encounter in their reading.
10. Strategic learners know how to study and use strategies independently as they learn with texts.
11. Instructional assessment is a continuous process that makes use of multiple methods of gathering relevant data for instructional purposes.
12. Participation in planned, reflective, inquiry-based professional development leads to professional growth and improved instruction.

New features of this edition include end-of-chapter activities that engage students in thinking about what they have read ("Minds-On") and applying information and new ideas ("Hands-On"). Many of the "Minds-On" and "Hands-On" activities encourage group interaction and collaborative learning. There are also instructor and student versions of an "Electronic Portfolio" designed primarily for easy classification and storage of student responses to *Content Area Reading*. However, the Electronic Portfolio can be used in many ways. For example, it will help the instructor generate and modify tests, and it will help students develop a collection of their insights over the entire course.

We would like to thank the reviewers of this fifth edition for their helpful comments: Jim Worthington, Seattle Pacific University; Christine Accetturo, Butler University; Sarah S. Pate, University of Alabama; Frank J. Pintozzi, Kennesaw State College; and Candace Poindexter, Loyola Marymount University.

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R.T.V.
J.L.V.

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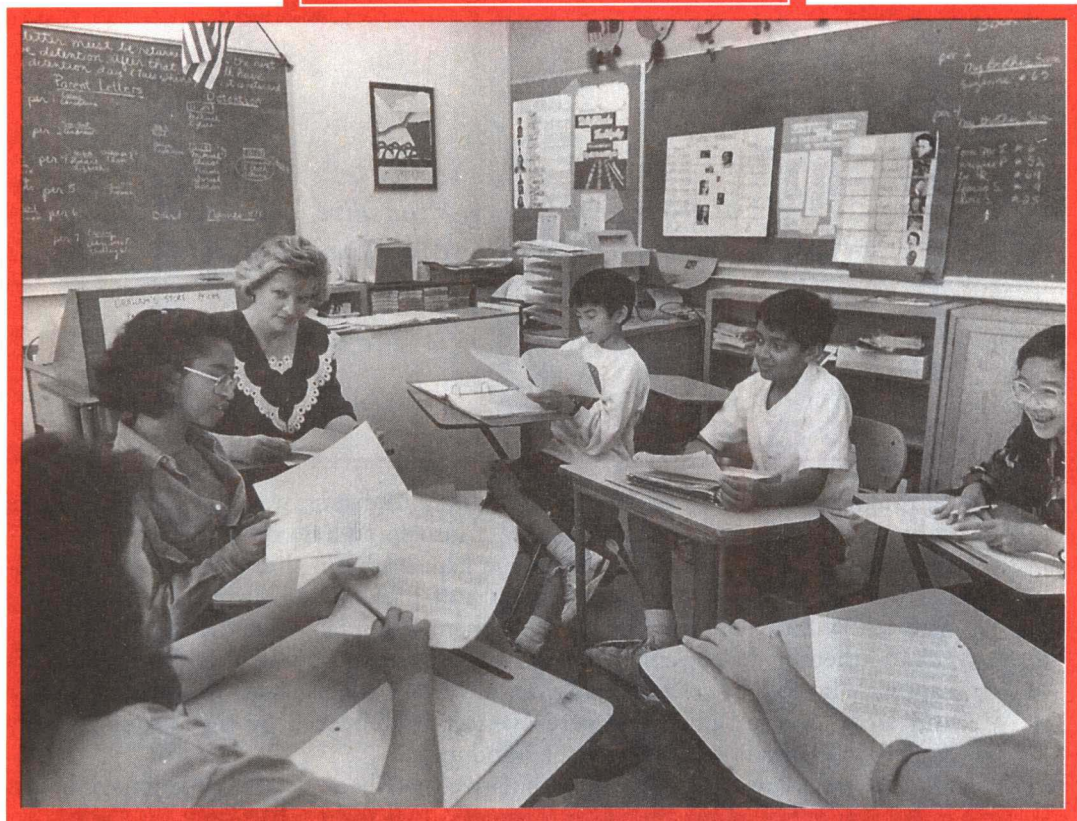
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Part I

Learners and Texts



Chapter 1

Teaching and Learning with Texts

I was desperate to keep my brain alive.

—Terry Anderson, the last of 13 American hostages
to be set free in Lebanon

ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE

Throughout his 2455 days in captivity, Terry Anderson waged an inner struggle with his worst fear: that he “would lapse into some kind of mental rot.” As horrendous as his experience was, Anderson kept his brain alive through the sustaining power of language. His ordeal did not prevent him from communicating with fellow hostages—first by teaching them a sign language that he half-invented, and then by developing a system of taps against the wall. And throughout his captivity, he fought to keep his brain alive by badgering his captors for books, and more books, until they were eventually delivered by the boxload. Terry Anderson knew all too well that the mind matters.

His experiences as a hostage dramatize that the real value of language lies in its uses. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that texts helped to keep Anderson’s mind and spirit alive, even that they kept his brain from mental and physical decay. *Brain* and *mind*, two terms often used interchangeably, explain what humans do best: thinking. Whereas the brain is a physical organ with its own intricate chemistry and physiology, the mind has a life of its own. To read is to engage the mind in thinking. Reading is a powerful means of putting language to