

THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD

An Introduction to Children's Literature



DONNA E. NORTON Texas A&M University

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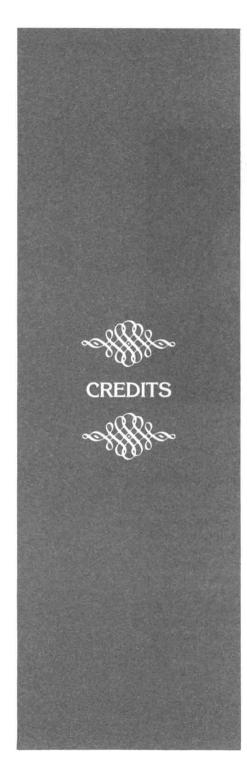
OLLOWING THE COMPLEtion of her doctorate at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Donna E. Norton joined the College of Education faculty at Texas A&M University where she teaches courses in children's literature, lanquage arts, and reading. Dr. Norton is the 1981-1982 recipient of the Texas A&M Faculty Distinguished Achievement Award in Teaching. This award is given "in recognition and appreciation of ability, personality, and methods which have resulted in distinguished achievements in the teaching and in the inspiration of students." She is listed in Who's Who of American Women.

Dr. Norton is the author of two books: The Effective Teaching of



Language Arts and Language Arts Activities for Children. She is a frequent contributor to journals and presenter at professional conferences. The focus of her current research is multiethnic literature and comparative education. In conjunction with this research, she has developed a graduate course that enables students to study children's literature and reading instruction in England and Scotland.

Prior to her college teaching experience, Dr. Norton was an elementary teacher in River Falls, Wisconsin and in Madison, Wisconsin. She was a Language Arts/Reading Consultant for federally funded kindergarten through adult basic education programs. In this capacity she developed, provided inservice instruction, and evaluated kindergarten programs, summer reading and library programs, remedial reading programs, learning disability programs for middle school children, elementary and secondary literature programs for the gifted, and diagnostic and intervention programs for reading disabled adults. Dr. Norton's continuing concern for literature programs results in frequent consultations with educators from various disciplines, librarians, and school administrators and teachers.



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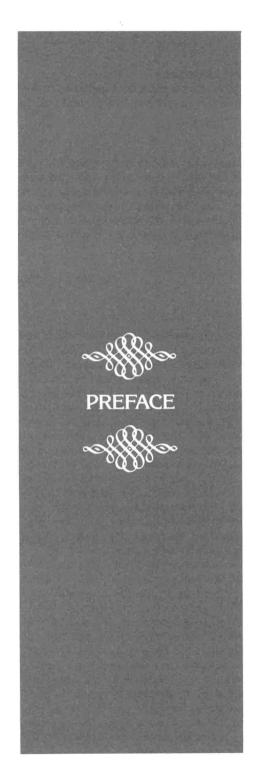
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HIS TEXT IS INTENDED FOR any adult who is interested in evaluating, selecting, and sharing children's literature. Its focus and organization are designed for children's literature classes taught in the departments of English, Education, and Library Science. Through the Eyes of a Child is written in the hope that adults who work with children and literature will discover and share with children the enchantment in books and help children develop a lifetime appreciation for literature and a respect for our literary heritage. It is my hope that my own love for literature and enthusiasm for books will be transmitted to the reader of this text.

HIGHLIGHTS

Extensive and Current Selection of Children's Books

The selection of books from the thousands of books available is a major concern for writers of children's literature textbooks. To determine the most suitable selections, I personally read over five thousand books. The ones discussed in Through the Eyes of a Child were chosen for their quality of literature, balance of content, variety of authors, and balance between new books and those which have passed the test of time or are considered classics in the field. Approximately twenty-five percent of the books included in each chapter were published within the two years prior to the publication of Through the Eyes of a Child. Thus, most of the books discussed in the text are in print. A few out-of-print books are included when they are the best examples for a specific discussion or when the books are just too good to be ignored. Most of these are still available in libraries.

Two-Part Chapter Organization

This unique feature of the text, beginning in chapter five and extending

through chapter twelve, places the characteristics, history, and titles of each genre right next to the appropriate strategies for involving children in that genre. Thus, genre and involvement can be taught together, sequentially, or independently. The involvement strategies have been field tested at the university, elementary, and secondary school levels, and during inservice training for teachers and librarians.

Emphasis on Criteria for Book Evaluation and Selection

Each chapter builds a model for evaluating and selecting books based upon literary and artistic characteristics which readers can then use themselves. The importance of child development in this process is also stressed.

Issues

Each chapter identifies important issues that are related to the genre or content of the chapter and which are designed to introduce teachers, librarians, and parents to current concerns. Most of these issue highlights are referenced to current periodicals and professional journals and are written to encourage readers' contemplation and further investigation. For this reason, they are presented as open-ended discussions.

Flashbacks

Also included in each chapter, these illustrated features highlight important people, works, and events in the history of children's literature. They are designed to provide a more complete understanding of the genre.

Through the Eyes of ...

Beginning with chapter three, each chapter includes a personal statement by a well-known author or illustrator which provides a special glimpse into their "view" of the creation of children's books.

Annotated Bibliographies of Children's Literature

These extensive bibliographies include readability by grade level and interest by age range.

Text Teaching Aids

Each chapter concludes with two groups of suggested activities designed to foster adult understanding of and children's appreciation for the genre. Special web diagrams are used throughout the text to highlight the interrelationships in literature, the many values of literature, and the multiple learning possibilities available. Webs are also used to illustrate the development of instructional activities and oral discussions about literature. The webbing process, according to my students, helps them clarify concepts, visualize relationships, and identify numerous values for sharing literature with children.

Chapter on Multiethnic Literature

This material was organized as a separate chapter to make it more accessible to librarians, teachers, and students of children's literature.

Annual Update

Due to the many additions and changes in this field, I will prepare for adopters of *Through the Eyes of a Child* a list of the new children's books and award winners, the new professional publications, and discuss current issues or new developments in the field. This free update will be distributed by the publisher when requested by instructors who have adopted the text for their class.

Donna E. Norton

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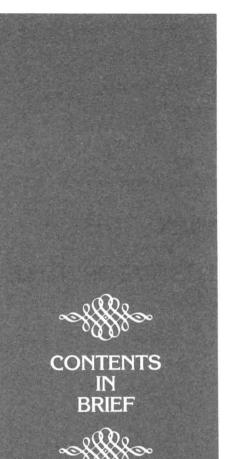
A massive project such as writing and publishing a children's literature text would not be possible without the enthusiasm, critical evaluation, suggestions, and hard work of many people. My appreciation is extended to my children's literature students, teachers, and librarians who discussed books with me. created enthusiasm for books, and shared books with children. The multiethnic literature chapter was enhanced by research conducted by Sue Mohrmann and Blanche Lawson; field testing in the Bryan, Texas schools; teachers and librarians across Texas who took part in the research; and support by curriculum coordinator Barbara Erwin and principal Marge Hazlet. The children's librarians at the Houston Public Library and the Houston Library archives deserve a special thank-you. They discussed reactions to books, searched for hard-to-locate literature, and allowed me to check out hundreds of books at one time. The writing of a text also requires typing expertise; the long hours of work performed by Loretta Johnson made a finished manuscript possible.

The children's librarians at the Public Library of Columbus and Franklin County; Grandview, Ohio Public Library; Bexley, Ohio Public Library; and Westerville, Ohio Public Library provided much assistance in locating numerous children's books.

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My sincere appreciation is also extended to Patricia Clapp, Beverly Cleary, Sandra B. Cohen, Tomie de Paola, Jean Fritz, Virginia Hamilton, Jamake Highwater, Madeleine L'Engle, Jack Prelutsky, Martin and Alice Provensen, and Jack Denton Scott for the time and creativity they were able to share with us during their very busy schedules. The insights, personal statements, and viewpoints of these authors, illustrators, and educators are especially rewarding in a textbook about children's literature.

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