

Book Reviews

Patrick Dias and Michael Hayhoe.
DEVELOPING RESPONSE TO POETRY.
Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 1988.
142 pp. £7.25.

This book is the product of an important international collaboration between two widely published authors. Several of the ideas presented have already been explored in somewhat greater depth in Patrick Dias' *Making Sense of Poetry – Patterns in the Process*, recently published (1987) by the Canadian Council of Teachers of English. In this sense then, he is the main progenitor of the book; however, Michael Hayhoe's contribution has given this new effort a broader, cross-cultural significance, lending greater credence to the theoretical pulse of the work and providing valuable implications for classroom practise at all levels.

The unifying theme of the book is a rethinking of the stoic, critical tendencies which have fortified themselves in the aftermath of "New Criticism." The point is that such a text-based stance in regard to the interpretation of poetry (or any language act for that matter) denies current, well-established research in how readers extract meaning from text.

The first chapter is a discussion of critical theories and their influence on classroom practise over the last five decades. The writing is straight-forward, and the argument posed is sparkling in its significance – a remarkable and pointed compendium, given the 24 pages. The authors move their discussion from the New Critical standpoint through Structuralism to Post-Structuralism.

Of particular interest is the discussion of "Reader-Response" criticism, especially the views expressed by Fish regarding "interpretive

communities." Having just read *Teaching Poetry Writing to Adolescents*, by Joseph I. Tsujimoto, I see a crossover between theory and practical success. Tsujimoto has made much use of the tradition of the interpretive community in tapping the potential of his students. His book is powerfully written in a real and sensitive voice, and I see it as being founded in Reader-Response theory. Also of interest is the notion of "aesthetic reading," or "gap-filling," posed by Iser and Rosenblatt's idea of a "transaction" between reader and text. Both seem to see reading as a dynamic process, dispelling the notion that the text alone is a repository of meaning.

A consideration of reading and discourse processing theories is divided into sections in chapter two, which discusses such paramount concepts as "Schemata," "Frames," and "Inferencing," to mention a few. The sections describe the various "transactions" among reader, text, and author – all which necessarily involve the background (extra-textual) knowledge of the reader. The examples posed provide insight into how readers derive meaning from poetry (text) and have important pedagogical implications. Of particular interest is the discussion of "metacognitive awareness," the notion of "authorizing readers" (or writers for that matter – recall Tsujimoto) to assume a more active, creative role in the process.

Chapter three turns to a comprehensive body of research on responses to literature. Of note is Richards' account of ten "principal obstacles and causes of failure in the reading and judgment of poetry." Of particular interest is the section where the authors discuss Travers' "Oral Responses to Literature." Here the point is pressed forward that untrained adolescents do have the ability to explore most aspects of poetry and even provide evidence to support their views. From this chapter, the reader can see support for Dias' Reading-Aloud-Protocols (RAPs). This chapter concludes with an analysis of those protocols and reveals four general patterns of reading (not readers!): paraphrasing, thematizing, allegorizing, and problem-solving.

The transcriptions with commentary of four actual RAPs with adolescents make up chapter four. This is a break in the theoretical stream of the work and is essential to a final understanding of its import. The close study of these RAPs can lead the teacher to an intuitive sense of the necessary stance to tap the potential of the student and make the methodology work.

Teachers' responsibility in a student-centred classroom is the subject of chapter five. The authors suggest the role of "wise adults who support strongly. They are wise enough to know that this strong support can range from setting up ritualized exploratory behaviour to that of strongest of all support, letting go."

Chapter six concludes the book appropriately with international perspectives on the teaching of poetry. There is a general agreement that poetry remains unpopular at the secondary level with both students and teachers, and that much of the problem can be attributed to the influences of New Criticism. The chapter provides insight into how various systems within the global village are attempting to meet the needs of their people.

In this writer's opinion, Patrick Dias and Michael Hayhoe have written a most important book. Since most teachers currently in the classroom are products of New Criticism, this book makes a strong argument for staff development. The implicit message also questions the very nature of an objectively definable (testable) literacy. I would take issue with those who claim that this book is too theoretical to be of practical use to classroom teachers because I have seen too often that the blind application of any methodology is worthless.

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REFERENCES

- Dias, Patrick X. (1987). *Making sense of poetry – Patterns in the process*. Ottawa: CCTE.
Tsujiimoto, Joseph I. (1988). *Teaching poetry writing to adolescents*. Urbana, IL: ERIC.

Richard M. Coe.

TOWARD A GRAMMAR OF PASSAGES.

Carbondale & Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988. 123 pp. \$10.95.

This book was published for the Conference on College Composition and Communication of the National Council of Teachers of English. The major author, a professor of English at Simon Fraser University, worked with a number of teachers to develop a schematic device to illustrate meaning relationships among the sentences in a piece of writing. The schematic device is a two-dimensional graphic layout that purports to show whether pairs of sentences are coordinate or whether one is subordinate or superordinate to the others. With this device you can show students why their writing is good or bad. You can demonstrate discourse differences between cultures and between registers. You can describe with some accuracy the typical discourses in given registers or genres of writing, such as technical writing and scientific description.