

Chapter 1

Critical Reading, Critical Literacy, and Critical Classrooms: The Power of Using Picturebooks With Preservice Teachers

Melissa Summer Wells

University of Mary Washington, USA

Jennifer D. Morrison

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9184-3406>

University of South Carolina, USA

Julia M. López-Robertson

University of South Carolina, USA

ABSTRACT

Critical reading and critical literacy are skills that preservice teachers need to cultivate not only in their future students, but also in their own literacy practices. Picturebooks have the unique power to facilitate critical reading and critical literacy with preservice teachers. This chapter analyzes critical reading, critical literacy, and the power of picturebooks and then presents three approaches for using picturebooks to develop critical reading and critical literacy skills with preservice teachers: (1) field-based coursework with multicultural children's literature, (2) analyzing voices and perspectives in read-alouds, and (3) analyzing wordless picturebooks. Through intentional use of picturebooks in educator preparation programs, preservice teachers can gain the expertise necessary to use picturebooks to craft their own critical classrooms.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8725-6.ch001

INTRODUCTION

In literacy methods courses, sharing picturebooks with preservice teachers is a fairly typical practice, especially when working with preservice teachers who wish to work in elementary contexts where picturebooks are common. However, picturebooks are not just for use with elementary-aged children; they can be highly beneficial for preservice teachers who intend to teach across K-12. Because many picturebooks can deal with difficult issues, they can serve as entry points into deep and complex conversations addressing prejudice, social justice, inequity, and morality. When reconceptualizing preservice teacher preparation in literacy education, what *more* can teacher educators do with picturebooks to prepare preservice teachers to be transformative stewards of literacy in K-12 settings?

According to Freire and Macedo (1987), “reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world” (p. 35). Preparing future teachers of literacy therefore requires developing their skills with not only making meaning from words, but also making meaning from students’ worlds. As the student population grows increasingly diverse, with every state having a higher percentage of students of color than teachers of color (Boser, 2014), how do educator preparation programs prepare preservice teachers to “recognize the importance of students’ socio-cultural, religious values, and the influence their cultural backgrounds have in their quest to succeed in their educational endeavors” (Taylor, Kumi-Yeboah, & Ringlaben, 2016, p. 42) when, according to hooks (1994), “most of us were taught in classrooms where styles of teaching reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to believe was universal” (p. 35)? The issue requires significant training and experiences for preservice teachers, and picturebooks provide one remarkably powerful vessel for this work.

In this chapter, an overview of critical reading, critical literacy, and the unique power of picturebooks will be provided. Next, the authors explain three approaches they implement when using picturebooks with preservice teachers to model critical reading and critical literacy to scaffold future teachers in their development of their own critical classrooms.

BACKGROUND

When used intentionally, picturebooks have the power to transform classroom instruction for all grade levels. In this section, the distinctions and overlaps between critical reading and critical literacy will be explained. In addition, the power of picturebooks as a unique genre that juxtaposes words and pictures will be explored, along with the specific relationship between picturebooks and principles of social justice.

Critical Reading and Critical Literacy

While the terms “critical reading” and “critical literacy” sound like they could be synonyms, there are significant distinctions between these two ways of approaching reading (Cervetti, Pardales, & Damico, 2001). The first term, critical reading, focuses on examining the relationship between the reader, the writer, and the subject, as depicted by Aristotle’s rhetorical triangle. In this relationship, the writer uses structures and rhetorical devices to communicate an intended purpose to an intended audience. The

21 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/critical-reading-critical-literacy-and-critical-classrooms/290752

Related Content

Teacher Insight on RTI Implementation at the Middle and High School Levels: A Comparative Case Study

Pam L. Epler (2016). *Teacher Education: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1100-1117).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/teacher-insight-on-rti-implementation-at-the-middle-and-high-school-levels/153353

Increasing Knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorders Among Urban Special Educators in Tanzania: Results From Three Teacher Training Workshops

Nilofer C. Naqvi, Sarah J. E. Wong-Goodrich, Amanda Martinage, Sarah L. Gordon, Jacqueline A. DeCuffa and Martha Collins (2020). *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development* (pp. 1-18).

www.irma-international.org/article/increasing-knowledge-of-autism-spectrum-disorders-among-urban-special-educators-in-tanzania/256587

Cultural Self-Study as a Tool for Critical Reflection and Learning: Integral Analysis and Implications for Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs

Natalie J. Pitre and Veronika Bohac Clarke (2017). *Handbook of Research on Promoting Cross-Cultural Competence and Social Justice in Teacher Education* (pp. 76-100).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/cultural-self-study-as-a-tool-for-critical-reflection-and-learning/163981

"You Want Me to Lead?": A Case Study of Pre-Service Teachers in an International Applied Learning Context in Belize

Meredith Jones and Susan Catapano (2020). *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development* (pp. 73-87).

www.irma-international.org/article/you-want-me-to-lead/243392

TAP (Teacher Learning and Application to Pedagogy) through Digital Video-Mediated Reflections

Poonam Arya, Tanya Christ and Ming Ming Chiu (2015). *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education in the Digital Age* (pp. 334-356).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/tap-teacher-learning-and-application-to-pedagogy-through-digital-video-mediated-reflections/134575