

Moss, Barbara. and Diane Lapp. *Teaching New Literacies in Grades K-3: Resources for 21st Century Classrooms*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2010. 321 pp. ISBN: 9781606234976. \$35.00 Softcover.

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The phrase “new literacies” describes an evolving list of skills that are required to successfully navigate current and rapidly emerging 21st Century forms of information and/or media. Given the inherent complexity of this description, most agree it is nearly impossible to nail down a finite list of skills or information delivery systems, but the current agreed upon definition usually includes references to visual literacy, media literacy, and digital literacy. Barbara Moss and Diane Lapp have edited two collections for Guilford Press’ Solving Problems in the Teaching of Literacy Series, one aimed at grades K-3 and the other at grades 4-6, and these two texts present forty-seven unique practical lessons that help teachers at all levels (including college) to demystify the literacy challenge. Educators at all levels who are committed to student learning can benefit from these examples of embedding new literacy skills in instruction. Instructors in subject areas where literacy is not seen as the primary learning goal will also be able to recognize that theirs are still important areas for developing literacy. In fact, ignoring this

need is perilous to all school educators since many standardized tests require students to read, deconstruct, interpret, and report information as found in math word problems and from charts, graphs, or maps. The implication of developing these skills for success in “real life” or for a career is just as important. The lessons are aimed at kindergarten through sixth grade but many are applicable for high school students and college freshmen who have not previously exposed to the critical literacy skills presented.

Both books fill need for new textbooks to address the teaching of the new literacies as called for in defining education statements: the 2009 *National Assessment of Education Progress in Reading* and the 2000 Report of the National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read*. New teachers will be able to take advantage of the lessons quickly; veteran teachers will find it easy to extrapolate and apply the activities to lessons they have delivered for years. Their perspectives align well with Writing Across the Curriculum initiatives and with Mackey and Jacobson’s suggestion that information literacy itself should be reconsidered as a *metaliteracy* (Reframing Information Literacy as a Metaliteracy,” *College and Research Libraries* 72, no. 1 (2011): 62-78). Moss and Lapp frame their collections of contributed lessons or “classroom vignettes” inside three concentric circles: critical literacy, strategic knowledge, and the changing role of instructors.

The first and largest circle, critical literacy (or the development of critical thinking skills), is obviously not a new concept to those teaching in higher education, but models for teaching students how to consciously transfer and apply those skills to new media may not have been part of their training. To that end, the sample lessons explore a broad range of text platforms: web pages, graphic novels or political cartoons, and even

instruction manuals, to name a few. Moss and Lapp observe that while elementary students may receive formal reading instruction time, constraints often reduce their opportunities to apply their reading skills critically (critical literacy). So while many students may successfully read the text of a folktale, successfully identify the facts in a biography, or even successfully learn to unravel the logic or recognize techniques used in a persuasive document, they may not have learned to use tools such as graphic organizers and rubrics. They may be unfamiliar with collaborative writing and peer editing activities. If they are exposed to these techniques at an earlier stage students may be better equipped to handle higher order thinking skills.

Moss and Lapp give less emphasis to the second frame, strategic knowledge, due to the rapid emergence of new forms of information delivery. But underlying their collection is a fundamental expectation that teachers understand that 21st century information is not necessarily delivered in a linear mode. The editors also consistently emphasize the importance of today's teachers' helping students to learn to navigate new information platforms, such as blogs and tweets for example—successfully and critically. Finally, the two texts are re-framed with the expectation that 21st century educators must create classrooms and learning activities that support teaching learning with a variety of information media. To do this means that teachers possess the skills to use today's media, that they know how to apply appropriate pedagogy and teaching tools using that media, and that they understand the theoretical foundations for critical thinking in order to adapt to new and emerging media.

The two books follow a parallel structure: initial chapters deal with application of new literacies to traditional reading lessons and genres taught in school (folk literature,

prose stories, poetry, drama, newspaper articles, and other factual documents). Later chapters address new literacy skills as applied to math problems, science lessons, graphic texts (graphic novels and cartoons), and web-based texts, and the final chapters focus on applying new literacy skills to writing and other presentation formats. Assessment suggestions and the learning step of reflection—two elements that were often overlooked in models of lesson plans of the past—are part of each lesson. International Reading Association and/or National Council of English standards are attached to each lesson. The scenarios into which sample lessons are folded do a good job of modeling scaffolding or a constructivist approach to develop skills using and the applications of new literacy skills learning and teaching in new formats can be very easily digested. The well-credentialed creators of the lessons make it possible to see how these tools can be easily adapted to different learning abilities and a very young age.

An example of an activity from the 4-6 grade volume (and one easily applied in higher education teaching) is the use of a “think aloud” activity, in order to walk students through decisions they must make when exploring and gathering information from a web site. Another sample lesson is a demonstration of how complementary biographies might be used to compare, contrast, and evaluate the facts presented in each version. This lesson could easily transfer to developing students' skills in reading and understanding scholarly, especially science-related research articles.

If the two books have any weakness, it is that the text of the introductory and concluding passages is almost identical, with slight modifications for the targeted grade levels. However, this is not a serious weakness, as users will likely focus on the sample lessons which are all different. Therefore, I highly recommend *Teaching New Literacies*

K-3 and *Teaching New Literacies 4-6* for collections supporting teacher education programs. I also recommend *Teaching New Literacies 4-6* for collections supporting effective teaching in higher education. In both cases, the \$60.00 hardbound copies are sturdy, inviting multiple uses, and the price for the paperback version (\$35.00) is affordable for almost any library. In addition, both books are available in electronic format.