
October 1972

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Recommended Citation

Bingham, Jane (1972) "Children's Literature: Views and Reviews," *Michigan Reading Journal*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 3 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj/vol6/iss3/6>

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CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: Views and Reviews

By Jane Bingham

Reading children's literature books aloud to a group of children can be a warm, rewarding experience for both teacher and pupils or it can be a boring, frustrating experience. Obtaining satisfying results from the oral sharing of stories depends, at least in part, on the teacher's effectiveness in selecting stories most appropriate for her (or his) audience, reading aloud effectively, and being sensitive to the needs and attitudes of her (or his) pupils.

If you feel that reading aloud periods in your classroom could be more satisfying for you and/or your pupils, ask yourself the following questions after a less than satisfying reading aloud period.:

Selection

1. Was the book you chose appropriate for reading aloud?
2. Did you like the story?
3. Did you feel that you wanted to share the book with the children?
4. Was the book emotionally moving, suspenseful or funny?
5. Did you feel that your pupils would enjoy the plot, characters, themes and writing style found in the book?

Reading Aloud

1. Did you read loudly enough?
2. Did you vary your pitch appropriately? Volume? Inflection? Rate?
3. Was your reading smooth? Were you comfortable with the author's style and could you pronounce all the words used

and did you know the meaning of all the words?

4. Did you pause often enough to give your listeners time to reflect?
5. Did you avoid interrupting the story with questions and explanations?
6. Did you establish eye contact often?
7. Did you stand or sit where all could see?
8. Did you hold the book low enough so that your face was fully visible?

Being Sensitive To Pupils Needs and Attitudes

1. Were the children seated comfortably and not distracted by other activities?
2. Did you indicate that you expected all the children to listen?
3. Did you preface your reading with an interesting statement about the book or it's author or an encouraging remark?
4. Did you have most of the children's attention before you began to read?
5. Were you careful not to use the story as a sermon or as punishment?
6. Did you stop reading before the children became restless?

When selecting books to read aloud remember that, for the most part, your pupils' interest and comprehension level is approximately two to three times higher than their own reading level.

Guidance in book selection may be

obtained from a number of resources. Huck and Kuhn's *Children's Literature in the Elementary School* discusses children's interests and needs at various ages and stages of development and suggests titles of books appropriate to ages, stages of development, interests and needs. Nancy Larrick provides a similar resource in her paperback edition of *A Teacher's Guide to Children's Reading*. Inexpensive paperback annotated bibliographies of children's books are also available. The books are usually arranged according to the type of literature (contemporary, historical, fanciful, biography, folk, poetry) and appropriate age levels. The following are the most widely used and available annotated bibliographies: Arbuthnot's *Children's Books Too Good To Miss*, Case Western Reserve Press, 1966 (\$1.75); Association for Childhood

Education International's *Bibliography of Children's Books*, ACEL, 1971 (\$2.25); and Mary Eakin's *Good Books for Children 1950-1965*, University of Chicago Press, 1966 (\$2.95).

The fourth edition of May Hill Arbuthnot's *Children and Books* has recently been published. The revision was done primarily by Zena Sutherland, whom you may know from her young people's books column in the *Saturday Review*. While much of Arbuthnot's original material has been retained, the text deals with many more books (current to 1972). A "Viewpoints" section appears frequently on various pages within chapters providing the reader with divergent opinions about the children's book field, and many more books with black, Chicano, and American Indian characters have been included.

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