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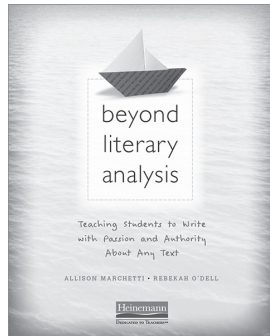
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Beyond Literary Analysis: Teaching Students to Write with Passion and Authority about Any Text

by Gina DeBlase, Ph.D.



Marchetti, A. & O'Dell, R. (2018). *Beyond literary analysis: Teaching students to write with passion and authority about any text*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. ISBN 978-0-325-09249-2



In *Beyond Literacy Analysis*, high-school English teachers Allison Marchetti and Rebekah O'Dell take the reader on a journey away from formulaic writing that centers on literary texts and into what's possible when students write about the real world. This text is a wonderful resource for middle- and secondary-school teachers who are looking for new and interesting methods for teaching analytic writing. The lament of many language arts and English teachers is that students' writing is often dry and formulaic. How, we wonder, can we support students and their writing in ways that assist them to better produce a compelling piece of written analysis?

The authors of this book contend that one very good approach is for teachers to broaden the definitions of both what counts as analysis and what counts as text. Incorporating 21st century understanding of texts enables students to write about and analyze movies, television, music, sports, and video games (to name but a few), as well as literature. In the first section, the authors explore how textual analysis has traditionally been taught in classrooms as almost exclusively literary analysis and they make a case for "broaden[ing] the definition of analysis for the 21st century classroom, so that it is, at once, deeper and richer but also incredibly simple: *Authentic analysis is a piece of writing that explores a text*" (p. 13).

With this broadened definition, the first part of the

book makes a case for analysis as a genre of writing that includes the kinds of texts that students love. For instance, music analysis might include how Lady Gaga has revolutionized pop music. A student who is a fan of *Game of Thrones* might write a television analysis of one episode of the series. Interesting and engaging writing may include fashion analysis, sports analysis (e.g., analysis of a particular sports team or player), video game analysis, political analysis, dance analysis, etcetera, as well as analysis of literature.

However, it's the second section of this book that many readers will find invaluable. In this section, Marchetti and O'Dell provide a wealth of classroom activities and strategies for assisting students to uncover and explore those passions that can be leveraged into fertile writing territory. They also provide annotated lists of strategies for potential solutions to common writing problems, such as writing that lacks focus or includes unoriginal ideas. There are a wealth of writing strategies that include use of model texts, mini-lessons, and conferring points to help students craft titles, home in on claims, gather evidence, etcetera. These strategies are engaging and doable, but even more, they appeal to students because they are designed to explore students' original thoughts about a topic or an idea. The examples provided make a compelling case that allowing students to write from their own experiences and to write about those things for which they have knowledge and passion enables students to write authentic analysis—a skill they will need for the rest of their lives.

Author Biography

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