

"You Gotta BE the Book"



**Teaching Engaged and
Reflective Reading
with Adolescents**

THIRD EDITION

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Foreword by
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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION



WHAT REALLY MATTERS

I'm somewhat astonished to now be working on the Third Edition of "*You Gotta BE the Book*". I'm finding it as fun and stimulating to work on now as it was back then.

It's been 10 years since I prepared the Second Edition and 20 years since the original publication. What has caused the book to continue to resonate with teachers over time? Why does it continue to inspire their teaching?

During these last 20 years, I've written over 35 different books about literacy and literacy learning. Even so, *YGBB* seems to be my foundational work.

When teachers talk to me at a conference, they most often want to talk about what "*You Gotta BE the Book*" has meant to them as teachers – or as parents, or as readers. I likewise get more emails about *YGBB* than about any of my other works. These messages are most frequently about the joy of reading, the interactive response dimensions of reading and, recently, how these dimensions apply to the reading of nonfiction (short answer: my current research shows that they apply perfectly; see Wilhelm & Smith, 2016). Sometimes I also get questions about methodological issues of pursuing teacher research, or fine-grained pedagogical questions (e.g. about how to use symbolic story representation with students). All of these are issues that I will take up in more detail in this edition.

Exhibit 1.1. Theories of Teaching and Learning Chart

	ONE-SIDED MODELS	MULTI-SIDED MODEL
Historical Roots	<p>Curriculum-Centred: Information Transmission Skinner, Pavlov, Thorndike</p> <p>Student-Centred: Discovery Piaget, Chomsky, Geselle, Rousseau</p>	<p>Sociocultural Teaching-/Learning-Centred: Inquiry as Cognitive Apprenticeship Vygotsky, Rogoff, Bruner, Hillocks; Dewey: <i>Child and Curriculum, Experience and Education</i></p>
Theoretical Orientation	<p>Behaviourism Focus on the <i>what</i> to be purveyed and reflected back</p> <p>Radical Constructivism Focus on the <i>who</i> of the learner, including their current interests and capacities</p>	<p>Coconstructivism Socioculturalism Focus on the <i>why</i> and <i>how</i> using the <i>what</i>, but on the conceptual level – addressing the <i>who</i> of the individual and their potential (<i>what and how they might learn next</i>) and, even more importantly, the <i>who</i> of the disciplinary community to be entered and emulated and the context of situated cognition (the <i>when</i> and <i>where</i> of knowledge production and use)</p>
How Learning Occurs	<p>Transmission of Information: Teaching is telling; learning is receiving and repeating</p>	<p>Transformation of Participation: Teaching is creating environments and instructional supports that assist and apprentice learners into ever more expert practice</p>
Context of Learning	School	Real World or spaces analogous to real world (e.g. inquiry contexts, drama worlds)



STILL STRUGGLING: TOMMY, WALTER AND KAE

Even as most of my students and I were excitedly pursuing drama and finding it a powerful way to engage with and share our reading, there were a few students who seemed reluctant participants, and who continued to struggle and be frustrated by their reading and by our classroom work. As a result, I continued to struggle to help them, and I was beginning to be frustrated too. Notable among this group were two LD-labelled students, Tommy and Walter and an EAL/D learner named Kae.

Not entirely to my credit, I vented my frustration in my journal in the following way:

Tommy and Walter are conspiring to give me a headache. Not just any old headache, but the pounding, throbbing, PARACETAMOL-inducing, pain piercing right through to the back of your pedagogical eyeballs sort of headache ... They don't want to read. I'm working hard to help them, to provide them with fun and supportive things to do as they read, and they don't *even want to try!* (October 1992)

If the truth be told, there were some other Year 7 students who were providing them with considerable help in the headache induction department, but I mostly blamed Tommy and Walter. After all, they were both in my last class of the day and they could be the most unreasonable, resistant, class-sabotaging students of the day. These were basically good kids, and I liked them. I knew they had had trouble in school over the past few years, and that Walter had transferred into our school from a parochial school to get the extra help his parents thought he needed. They could be pleasant and likeable as well as negative in their behaviour.

Their frustration with school and with reading lessons was almost palpable by the end of the day. Some days it was as if they walked into class with a giant force-field of rage or gloom hanging around their bodies. I wanted badly to help them, to create openings for literacy opportunities that they could enjoy and participate in and grow from. But sometimes I just found myself out and out frustrated. There were days when I gave up and let them just sit there. I wrote that "If we had prizes for 'Frontal Lobe Headache Maker of the Day', Walter and Tommy would get my vote every single election" (October 1992).

Another student who concerned me was Kae. Kae was from the Hmong culture and had come to us from Laos, via Thailand and Chicago. She

seemed to provide a natural bridge between the drama and visualisation projects. Students were necessarily representing essential story elements visually as they dramatised a story for their classmates. Their reading, made visible, could be talked about, critiqued, manipulated and revised. New moves and elements could be added and experimented with.

Visual Protocols

During the classroom use of visualisation techniques, students were asked to read a story and to stop whenever they had formed a strong visual impression and draw a picture of that impression. Some students began to stop and draw when they felt the need to get a visual impression clear in their minds, and they were encouraged to do so. Though some students participated in cued protocols, during which they were asked to either describe or draw their visual impressions at particular points in a story, Kae, Walter and Tommy participated only in uncued protocols, so they drew pictures only when they indicated that they wanted to.

Reading Illustrated Books

During the first part of the project, I brought a crate of picture books into the classroom. Each day, I would share one of these books as a companion piece to another non-illustrated reading. We discussed how the picture books worked: how the pictures worked with the words to contribute to our experience of story. We then discussed the type of pictures the non-illustrated story might have, the sort of pictures we could imagine in our minds that would fit the story, how using different types of pictures (different colour schemes, techniques, photos versus drawings, fold-out, pop-up, highlighting different scenes or moods) would affect the reader's experience.

Later on, I brought in sets of the complete series of *Asterix* and *Tintin* comic books, some copies of *Classics Illustrated* and two copies of the illustrated Holocaust tale *Maus*. There was a stampede for these books, and it continued for months, on the part of the less proficient readers. Many of these students read nothing else but comic books for their free reading for the rest of the year. On the other hand, these illustrated books were pretty much ignored, with one or two exceptions, by the more proficient readers. (An exception was Art Spiegelman's Holocaust stories *Maus* and *Maus II*, which were read and traded by several very proficient