

Book review

Wing Jan, L. (2009). *Write ways: Modelling writing forms*. (3rd ed). Victoria: Oxford.

Literacy learning and teaching is an important topic which dominates government policies and the media coverage of education. Consequently, it should not be surprising to find many books on the market which address the issue of literacy and learning. The third edition of *Write ways: Modelling writing forms* by Lesley Wing Jan is the latest contribution to this field. It offers a no nonsense practical approach for learning and teaching of writing.

The author's background as an Education Consultant who has taught for many years in both Government and independent schools is demonstrated in the book with explicit links between theory and practice. Wing Jan was responsible for facilitating the development, implementation and evaluation of curriculum (P-6) and supporting teacher professional learning within the primary section of a large P-12 school campus. She has a particular interest in curriculum planning, literacy teaching and learning, the inquiry process, thinking skills, monitoring student progress and student self-assessment, which is evident throughout her book. For many years Wing Jan was a member of the Review Board for *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* (Australian Literacy Educators' Association). She has written a number of books and journal articles about teaching and learning, as well as collaborated in the production of several education videos.

Write ways: Modelling writing forms (3rd ed) is an informative text which is easy to read. Its intended audiences are pre-service and practicing teachers. Although the text is designed mainly at the primary level of teaching and learning, it is also valuable for secondary English teachers as there are many examples and activities useful for the secondary classroom. Wing Jan writes about the theory which underpins literacy teaching and learning, providing particular definitions of the wide conceptual uses of literacy that highlights the complex nature of these terms. Through the inclusion of theory and clear links between theory and practice (activities) Wing Jan emphasises the intertwined nature of teaching and learning in writing.

The text covers a wide range of text types or genres, factual and fictional, and the broad nature of writing and meaning making. It includes graphs, diagrams, and pictures which add meaning to each text type addressed. The book is set out in a way that makes it reader friendly, with step by step ideas about how to teach children to become good writers using multiple activities, and making explicit the links between writing, reading and talking and listening.

Throughout the book, Wing Jan breaks each of the texts into their parts using annotated examples of texts, as well as explaining the purpose of text, the structure of text, and the main grammatical features associated with that genre or text type. This allows the reader to use these as models for their teaching of literacies. Small text boxes throughout the text highlight the important features which Wing Jan is trying to focus on at that point.

The text is a good resource for pre-service teachers, not only for planning how to teach writing, but also for assessment of children's writing. Included in the assessment chapter are checklists, anecdotal records, and a discussion and explanation of the purposes of different ways of assessing for learning. The theory and purpose of assessment is clearly written, allowing readers to become more aware of how theory and practice are intertwined for learning and teaching. The flow chart of the assessment cycle, and the need to be systematic with assessing children's understanding of writing is concise, demonstrating the need, importance, and cyclical nature of assessment.

New features of the book are the "Think and Link" questions throughout each chapter, which ask readers to think about related topics and how they connect with their knowledge of writing. At the end of each chapter the author lists further resources in an annotated style which calls the reader's attention to appropriate references for each topic and explains why these references are valuable. This is an excellent tool which supports the reader to have a better understanding of what constitutes a good resource, such as multimedia, computer based and books which focus on supporting the teaching and learning of writing. A glossary of key terms enables readers to become familiar with the professional language used by teachers when discussing, assessing and teaching literacy. One of the book's unique features is the inclusion of the Oxford Wordlist of the most frequently used words, collected from writing samples of students in their first three years of school. This practical addition helps readers to understand the importance of spelling for writing and which words are needed for children to write in a more independent way in their first three years of schooling. Also the link to an online resource centre for pre-service teachers which provides assessment checklists and activities supporting children's learning and engagement with writing is a bonus.

While acknowledging the need to be selective of what is covered in such texts, perhaps a chapter on children's development of writing could be included with the view to justifying the appropriateness of activities at certain points when students are learning about and learning to write. The inclusion of this area of knowledge would help pre-service teachers in their planning and expectations of children's writing.

If you are considering a book on how to teach writing then I would recommend this easy to read and accessible text. Pre-service teachers and teachers of primary and secondary students will benefit having this book as an up to date resource due to the inclusion of many features that are practical and linked to theories of teaching and learning.

Vicki Parkes

School of Education, University of Newcastle, Australia
vicki.parkes@newcastle.edu.au