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## Book Reviews

### **Play and Literacy, *Play & Culture Studies*, Vol. 16**

*Myae Han and James E. Johnson, eds.*

Lanham MD: Hamilton Books, 2021.

List of figures, list of tables, preface, acknowledgments, introduction, index, and about the contributors. 176 pp.

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The introduction of *Play and Literacy*, edited by Myae Han and James E. Johnson, calls attention to how play is an effective way to learn and develop literacy. Throughout the book, the editors and authors make a case for the rich benefits of play that result in cognitive development. The lifetime achievements of James Christie, a renowned academic scholar in the field of literacy and play, provide a foundation for empirical research supporting play as a legitimate and significant tool in children's cognitive development. His work and others propel readers to move beyond traditional theories such as Lev Vygotsky's and Jean Piaget's. The chapters challenge the field by considering alternative perspectives about literacy and play. For example, chapter 5 show-

cases Tori K. Flint's research with first graders, viewing play as a form of reader response and expanding on the work of Louise Rosenblatt. With the increasing use of technology in early childhood learning spaces, chapter 3 offers insights into digital play using iPads. In this chapter, Renée Casbergue and Julie Parrish take us on a journey with preschoolers who engage in play as they create content for digital books involving drawings, photographs, and writing. Many professionals inquire about the best ways to use digital tools with young readers and writers, and the ideas from these chapters encourage educators to merge digital tools and play in child friendly ways.

The book's reader friendly writing makes it an easy read for professors, graduate students, practicing teachers, and other professionals. The research studies are well grounded in decades of literature and showcase the benefits of play in literacy learning. Each chapter addresses the need to challenge hegemonic educational systems that have relentlessly eliminated play from early childhood curricula. The most beneficial portion of the text can be found at the end of each chapter where the

authors make recommendations that provide play opportunities leading intentionally to the development of various literacy skills. These are outlined to show teachers how to embed new practices into their scripted curricula. Chapter 2 links book play with narrative comprehension and vocabulary development by following a read aloud with a ten-minute play session using related materials. Closely related is chapter 7, where Meachum and Han offer insight into how teachers and adults can use their language (i.e., responsiveness) to impact receptive and expressive vocabulary development. In addition, chapter 4 provides a list of children's literature featuring play that educators can use to inspire playful learning in their classrooms and other learning environments such as museums. The suggestions are practical, meaningful, and innovative.

The book's final two chapters cover second-language learning, a vital topic given the growing diversity of the United States. The authors of these chapters ask us to consider play with adults learning new languages. In particular, drama-based instruction (DBI) offers an alternative to direct translation activities and allows learners to become playful in their attempts to communicate in a new language. Communicative language teaching (CLT) is also used to create a playful environment in which adult learners work in pairs to interact and negotiate. The key is authenticity that can be applied to any learning context.

Although joy, happiness, and fun are not usually considered essential components of literacy learning environments, this volume offers hope and inspiration for building play into everyday literacy prac-

tices. Play is an avenue into academic rigor that can have a positive impact on literacy development in first and second languages. Building literate identities and building upon personal interests are possible when play is at the forefront. Schools and educators would be remiss in educating all students if they did not employ play-based pedagogies and set up playful environments in which everyone can engage in literacy practices. This edited volume will inspire readers to rethink existing practices and revalue play.

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—Sally Brown, *Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA*

### **What the Children Said: Child Lore of South Louisiana**

*Jeanne Pitre Soileau*

Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021. Preface, introduction, notes, works cited, appendix, general index, index of first lines and titles. 331 pp. \$99.00 cloth, \$30.00 paperback, ISBN: 9781496835741

Expositions of children's folklore since the late nineteenth century have taken primarily the form of the annotated collection. Compilers transcribe material that draws attention to itself because of the context of play and imagination as poetry and narrative from orally performed rhymes, songs, jokes, legends, and tales; socially enacted games, pranks, and routines; and spoken slang and sayings. The emphasis typically lies in the produced creative texts of an anonymous individual rather than in that of children playing in groups. Less often, mention is made of the craft and architecture of childhood and the integration