

Mary Roche
DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH PICTUREBOOKS
A GUIDE FOR PRIMARY AND EARLY YEARS STUDENTS AND TEACHERS
Routledge, June 2014
Paperback, 210pp, ~~£89.99~~ £26.99
ISBN 9780415727723

How refreshing to find a book setting out a philosophy of education so clearly located in a wider philosophy of life. In pursuit of a vision of a truly democratic society, Mary Roche wants to use education to develop a population of independent thinkers, capable of constructing a culture in which opinions and assumptions are not defended incoherently. In this passionately argued and densely researched book, she explains how critical thinking can be introduced into the classroom from the start. Using picturebooks, and drawing on the 'Philosophy for Children' model already used in schools, she rejects narrow 'decoding the text' tests of comprehension, which mitigate against the development of critical faculties.

Illustrating her methods with transcripts of discussions from her own classroom, Roche demonstrates the benefits of her approach, showing how critical thinking emerges as children engage in 'book talk', discussing possible meanings in both text and illustrations. Clearly structured chapters dealing with the underlying philosophy, interactive readalouds, oral language development, picturebook theory, classroom practice and practical advice, and ending with a list of suitable picturebooks, should enable time-pressed teachers to dip into this book for ideas.

Arguably, the inevitable tension for the teacher in simultaneously playing the roles of both 'neutral facilitator' and 'more knowledgeable other' could be more fully discussed, but Roche leaves teachers to address such issues for themselves and to adapt her ideas for implementation in their own teaching. It is a fascinating read and an inspiring antidote to the current tick-box approach to classroom practice.

Academic - Nicki Oakes-Monger, **Inis** reviews.

Mary Roche's (2000) masters dissertation on *How can I improve my practice so as to help my pupils to philosophise?* can be accessed from <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/items.asp?id=52>

Mary Roche's doctorate on *Towards a living theory of caring pedagogy: interrogating my practice to nurture a critical, emancipatory and just community of enquiry* can be accessed from <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/items.asp?id=46>