

shield ‘alternative’ interpretations from the censor while encouraging sympathetic readers to make those interpretations”. An interesting example is translations by a Russian poet who served in the Gulag and “inserted prison slang into his translations, inscribing his own experience on the textual surface of the translation” (338).

To conclude, *A Companion to Translation Studies* is a highly valuable recent contribution to the field of translation studies, which provides a broad audience with a comprehensive and excellent overview both of major issues discussed within the discipline and of the most recent trends in research. In addition, as its editors point out, it is conceived as a handbook that will be useful to students, with both theoretical and practical interest in translation, including those interested in translations of children’s literature.

*Snježana Veselica Majhut*

## Picturebooks and Little Thinkers

**Mary Roche. 2015. *Developing Children’s Critical Thinking through Picturebooks*. Abingdon: Routledge. 195 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-72768-6**

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*Developing Children’s Critical Thinking through Picturebooks* provides an interesting insight into how to use picturebooks as a tool for developing critical thinking from a young age. It is a perfect combination of theoretical background and practical advice to help teachers and parents, among others, to think about their own approach to analysing any material to be used with students or children.

The book is written by Mary Roche, an Irish teacher and researcher with a particular interest in critical thinking and literature. It is the result of her lifelong devotion to reading and thinking about reading. Throughout this book, the reader feels her passion and the rich experience she has in this field.

As the author says, the book itself is aimed at classroom teachers, future teachers, literacy students, parents, and all those who are interested in promoting critical thinking and raising it to a higher level from a young age. The language used in the book is easily understood and is therefore accessible to all the previously mentioned audiences. The author herself emphasises that the book does not provide a simple recipe that the reader can follow when analysing picturebooks. However, it guides the reader and provides advice on how to improve “book talk”. Many examples from the author’s own practice play a crucial role in understanding her approach, and help the reader in improving his or her own practice in this area.

The book is divided into two main sections, a theoretical and practical one, which are sometimes intertwined due to the fact that you simply cannot have one without the other. The book in general is divided into eight equally important chapters.

The introductory part of this book is well organised and provides an enjoyable welcome. It explains why this book was written, briefly describes the relevant experience of the author, and explains in detail the structure of the book. The reader certainly knows what to expect and feels equipped to start.

The first chapter (“Critical thinking and book talk”) provides a short outline of what critical thinking is, why it is important, and what is needed to develop it. It also dwells upon

some problems in education connected with literacy and critical thinking, and emphasises how important it is to overcome these hurdles.

The focus then moves to the basic difference between comprehension and meaning making, both of which are clearly defined. In the second chapter (“Comprehension and meaning making”) we also learn something new about different perspectives on literacy and what they have to do with ideology in general. A powerful illustration is also given of how we can learn from each other when reading picturebooks: in the chosen example, children found details in a picturebook that was being read to them which escaped adults’ attention. The adults were surprised when they were directed towards these details. This demonstrates how we, as teachers or parents, often neglect some information to which children can often open our eyes.

In the next chapter, “Interactive, or dialogic, reading aloud”, the author expounds on interactive reading, reading aloud, and intertextuality, and their importance. She also lists the benefits of engaging with literature, including the potential to go beyond lived knowledge and experience, the gaining of a deeper connection with one’s cultural and historical heritage, and the development of one’s aesthetic sense. At the end of this chapter, there is a lovely example from Roche’s practice which shows how eagerly children participate in this kind of discussion, and how they often remember this experience throughout their life.

“A focus on oral language development” celebrates the development of language as a result of reading and discussion. This chapter draws attention to the fact that the more we read or are read to, the more we expand our vocabulary and the ways to express ourselves. Teachers are therefore crucial when it comes to vocabulary development as some children are not read to at home from an early age. Roche uses many experiences from her own research to prove her point. One enlightening example is where the author mentions three picturebooks suitable for a specific age, and gives a detailed guide on what to expect regarding the range of language experience.

The next chapter, “Some picturebook theory”, discusses what picturebooks actually are and why they are so special, and includes titles of high-quality picturebooks: some are examples of metafiction, while others exploit irony or exemplify intertextuality. If you are not familiar with some of these terms, fear not, Roche explains them very well. In this chapter you will also discover how picturebooks are connected with semiotics and advertising, and how aesthetic appeal works on children.

Chapter six, entitled “CT [critical thinking] & BT [book talk] in the classroom”, replaces theory with many examples from Roche’s practice, and brings the reader directly to the centre of the action – the classroom. It contains a set of case studies that demonstrate how children “breathe”. The main actors in this fascinating chapter are primary-school students of various age groups. Roche focuses on her students’ observations and her own observations of them, and gives good advice on how to improve book talk and avoid potential problems.

Chapter seven is reserved for all kinds of practical advice, from choosing the right books, setting up discussions, introducing children to CT and BT and setting the necessary ground rules, to evaluating and assessing pupils’ work, reflecting on previous work, and even cross-curricular work. All the relevant aspects are comprehensively covered.

The last chapter draws the conclusion. It sums up the book's main ideas, and emphasises the key theoretical background and advice on how to use picturebooks to promote critical thinking. It highlights the importance of reading and thinking about one's reading, in light of its importance in life in general. A useful appendix follows, providing a list of recommended picturebooks arranged by topic. Those new to teaching or to picturebooks will find this particularly appealing.

In sum, the effect of the book is that the reader feels inspired and ready to get down to the business of developing children's critical thinking through picturebooks. Roche's lucid writing style makes the subject easy to understand, and the numerous examples and advice encourage the reader to take on board the concepts that are expounded in this engaging and accessible book.

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## Getting It Right from the Start

**Janice Bland, ed. 2015. *Teaching English to Young Learners: Critical Issues in Language Teaching with 3–12 Year Olds*. London: Bloomsbury. 293 pp. ISBN 978-1-4725-8856-2**

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The gradual establishment of English as a global lingua franca of sorts has (among other things) led not only to the inclusion of English language (EL) classes into school curricula, but in recent years also to the slow but steady lowering of the age at which foreign language instruction is first introduced to students. The attitude that (when it comes to foreign language learning) younger is necessarily better has, for the most part, been uncritically accepted, resulting in a worldwide trend of early primary, and especially pre-primary language learning programmes. While the term “young learner” (YL) has therefore been significantly expanded, its newest component, pre-primary learners (age 3–6), is not always recognised as a separate group with its own specific needs and learning style. As such, it is still largely overlooked in both theory (a dearth of research on the subject), and practice. Teachers of English for young learners (EYL) often receive little to no special training to meet the specific needs of (pre-)primary learners (who, having “no immediate need to use English and therefore no need to learn it”, are highly dependent on teachers; 279) and they lack appropriate resources, and even motivation.

Aimed at addressing some of the problematic points outlined above, the edited volume *Teaching English to Young Learners: Critical Issues in Language Teaching with 3–12 Year Olds* brings together fifteen contributions written by experts from France, Germany, Portugal, Sweden, and the UK, who discuss a variety of theoretical and practical issues related to YLs, their specific needs, interests, and learning styles. At the helm of this praiseworthy and timely project is editor Janice Bland, Deputy Chair of TEFL at the University of Münster. As co-editor of the *Children's Literature in English Language Education* journal, and author/co-editor of several titles dedicated to English language learning, such as *Children's Literature and Learner Empowerment: Children and Teenagers in English Language Education* (2013) and *Children's Literature in Second Language Education* (co-edited with Christiane Lütge, 2013), Bland – who also authored three papers in the volume – seems ideally suited to broach the issue of EYL.