

## Professional Literature You Won't Want to Miss!

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Cowhey, Mary. ***Black Ants and Buddhists: Thinking Critically and Teaching Differently in the Primary Grades*** 2006. Stenhouse.  
ISBN:1-57110-412-6

### Highlights:

- Uses authentic children's literature to spark discussions about social justice
- Provides a safe environment to have deep discussions which lead into social action.
- Shares children's reactions to projects through their writing and their stories.
- Inspires families to get involved
- Teaches historical truths to replace the historical myths
- Models cultural responsiveness

Get ready for one of the most exciting, inspiring reads of the year! This brand new book is a powerful story written from the teacher's perspective as she travels through a year in the life of her first and second grade children. She helps her children reach a deeper understanding of the world by using children's literature as a springboard to social justice issues. Many of the stories elicited responses of social action from the children, not just the teacher.

Thompson, Gail. ***Through Ebony Eyes: What Teachers Need to Know But Are Afraid to Ask about African American Students***. 2004. Jossey-Bass.  
ISBN: 0-7879-7061-1.

Gail Thompson takes you, the reader, on an unforgettable ride, viewing the world through her unique perspective. As you enter this book, you may wonder what she can share that you haven't heard before. Thompson's candid talk about current issues, including language and race, enlighten one's thinking and provoke critical reflection for unlearning and relearning crucial cultural attributes. As the ride continues, her personal stories bring to life the trials and tribulations experienced through ebony eyes. Around every corner is another fascinating strategy to aid you as a professional as you work with students of all ages. As your journey comes to an end, you may, like myself, find many highlighted passages and dog-eared pages to aid your return to those memorable and favorite sections.

England, Crystal M. ***Both Ways: Meeting Students Who Struggle in School Uphill***. 2004. . Heinemann. ISBN: 0-325-00555-9.

This short book is packed with strategies and stories that make it a memorable read. I guarantee that it will become one of your favorite books and you will refer to it again and again. Her opening scenario finds Jack and Jill struggling to get to the schoolhouse atop the hill amidst many obstacles. Often they tumble back to the bottom and through resiliency begin the trek once more. Her clever use of organizational techniques makes this book useful and easy to follow. England offers statistics to emphasize her concerns and provides creative ways to overcome some of the burdens that haunt education. You will find yourself urging colleagues to purchase a copy for themselves (you won't want to let your copy leave your hands!).

Conroy, Pat. ***The Water Is Wide***. 1972. Bantam Books. ISBN: 0-553-38157-1.

This may be a stretch to be listed under the category of professional literature since it is actually an autobiographical story of Pat Conroy's beginning teaching experience. I like to think of professional books in a broad sense, and including this in my review helps to expand what we may consider as useful literature. This book provokes critical thought as it immerses the reader in authentic experiences that are directly related to social issues. The reader will find Pat as a first year teacher on Yamacraw Island across the shores of South Carolina. Conroy shares his experiences with the children and their families in glorious detail. His students had never been off the island, never heard of a map, nor knew about trick-or-treat night. When he attempts to take them to the mainland, the families refuse to let the children get into the boat; they are certain they will fall in and sink like rocks. Although this book was written about his life in the 1960's, it has relevance to obscure communities in the United States today. You may not relate to the families on Yamacraw, but it is valuable to learn about their unique culture with roots that stretch into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Through his clever storytelling, an entire culture comes to life and reminds us how the past folds into the present.

Nieto, Sonja, Ed. ***Why We Teach***, 2005. Teachers College Press.  
ISBN: 0-8077-4593-6.

Highlights:

- Insight from Sonia Nieto, the award-winner of the 2005 *Outstanding Educator* by National Council for the Teachers of English (NCTE) and a legend in our time
- Provides a thorough look into statistics facing teachers today
- Hear the voice of social justice as it weaves its way through the stories
- Heartfelt stories from 21 teachers in all grade levels

- A look at what works for these teachers and what keeps them in the business
- Provides hope and inspiration for all educators

Sonia Nieto is well known for the many books she has written regarding advocacy, diversity, cultural issues and social justice. Now she has taken a new direction in her writing: editing a book that celebrates 21 dedicated teachers whose passion for teaching still prevails even in these difficult times. Many of the teachers chosen for this book were acquaintances of Sonia, some were suggested to her by friends while others were discovered through articles or other public media. All of them share the love of teaching.

Thomas-EL , Salome. ***I Choose to Stay: A Black Teacher Refuses to Desert the Inner City*** 2003. Kensington Publishing. ISBN: 0-7582-0187-7.

Highlights:

- Tells his story, beginning with his childhood and being raised by his mother with seven siblings
- Shares his experiences in different school environments, including the inside feelings of being the black minority in many situations
- Discusses how he evolved both professionally and personally to return to the inner city to teach
- Takes you on his journey as he engages the inner city students in a win-win situation: chess matches
- Social justice prevails throughout Thomas' story

The story of Salome Thomas-EL is the amazing evolution of an inner city boy from Philadelphia who, with the help of his family and teachers, found his way to college and eventually in the role of the teacher. The text is simple, personal and concrete which adds to the magic of the book. His writing is such that you know him; he pulls you in and you can imagine what it must have been like to cross the many hurdles that confronted him.