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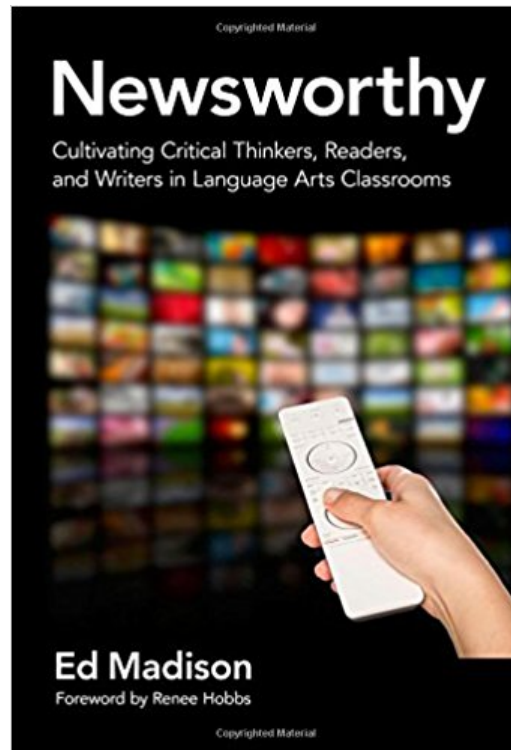
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*Review of **Newsworthy: Cultivating Critical Thinkers, Readers, and Writers in the Language Arts Classroom***

By Ed Madison

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Madison, E. (2015). *Newsworthy: Cultivating critical thinkers, readers, and writers in the language arts classroom*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

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The abundance of technological outlets available at our fingertips makes news and media easier to access than ever before. In the traditional classroom, the incorporation of news and media is often overlooked due to rigid curriculum and standardized tests. However, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative for English Language Arts (ELA) and Literacy align with *journalistic learning*, which *Newsworthy: Cultivating critical thinkers, readers, and writers in the language arts classroom* defines as “a research-based pedagogical approach that borrows strategies from journalism to better engage students in language arts” (p. 3). Author Ed Madison explicates how journalistic learning aligns with the CCSS by exposing students to higher levels of reading comprehension, engaging them in the writing process, exposing them to a variety of nonfiction genres, teaching them to write concisely for a specific audience, and helping them distinguish between fact and opinion.

Not only does journalistic learning help students meet these standards, it also provides opportunities for reading, writing, sharing, and collaborating about engaging, current topics that are meaningful for them. Through the examination of cases, Common Core strategies, technology integration ideas, and resources, Madison provides insight into how teachers can incorporate this research-based approach in the ELA classroom.

The majority of Madison’s book is practical in nature. It balances qualitative descriptions of observations, interviews, and surveys with examples of how to facilitate journalistic learning in classrooms. The book is organized into six chapters (including the conclusion) and opens with a theoretical framework and background of the research. Chapters 2 and 3 draw on Madison’s fieldwork at Palo Alto High School (CA) and interviews/surveys with

teachers across the country to explore what reading, writing, speaking, listening, and research look like in the context of journalistic learning. Chapter 4 portrays how journalistic learning can be applied in a variety of settings and with diverse range of student populations. Chapter 5 describes a weeklong pilot project that was conducted at Roosevelt High School (Portland, Oregon) and used journalistic learning to promote digital literacy skills. Finally, the book concludes with directions for future research and a call to action.

The accessibility of the heart of the book (Ch. 2-5) is what makes it stand out. While these chapters synthesize robust, qualitative research, Madison describes his data in a readable way that connects directly to ideas for integrating journalistic learning in the classroom. For instance, Madison describes a secondary ELA teacher’s use of Clark’s (2006) “X-ray reading” strategy to engage students in reading for form. He provides a collaborative learning strategy that would allow students to not only read for form but also meet a variety of standards, such as identifying an author’s perspective and analyzing how an author advances or refines their ideas. Throughout each of these chapters, Madison uses gray text boxes to distinguish “Common Core Strategies” and “Technology Tip” sections that teachers can immediately apply in their classrooms. Additionally, these chapters include a summary of the chapter’s takeaways as well as ideas for a variety of additional resources to use (e.g., books, video, websites).

As a former secondary ELA teacher and high school journalism student, I valued this book’s overt connections between ELA and journalism. Specifically, Table 2.1 English and Journalism Terms (p. 23) made me stop and pause to reflect on my own teaching practices. Table 2.1 depicts the strong association between forms of

journalistic and English course writing. Although I often taught persuasive writing in the context of an editorial, I never considered using other journalism forms to engage students beyond persuasive writing. I could have engaged my students in the reading, writing, language, and speaking and listening content standards they were expected to meet by using a journalism context. The schools I taught in gave me the freedom to be creative in the strategies that I used with students. However, in Chapter 3, Madison notes the challenges that may arise in schools and districts that are not as supportive of nontraditional approaches. He goes on to advocate for incorporation of these approaches in order to empower and motivate students.

For those committed to equity, diversity, and inclusivity, Chapter 4 uses interviews with both teachers and students to explore examples and strategies for engaging diverse populations in journalistic learning. For example, one strategy supports student development in the skills of presenting an opinion and producing clear writing by using breaking news stories (e.g., violence based on race or religion) to help students explore how these topics connect to their own community. Additionally, the summer program at the Boys and Girls Club in East Palo Alto aimed to engage students who were less likely to enroll in the journalistic-style ELA courses at Palo Alto High. The success of this intensive summer program affirms the value of this pedagogical approach as well as the importance of using these journalistic learning strategies in ELA classrooms as opposed to exclusively offering them in elective courses or extracurricular programs that can marginalize some student populations.

The affordances of digital technology make the creation of content that can be accessed by others easier than ever before. In order to

capitalize on the content creation that students practice outside school (Boyd, 2014; Lenhart & Madden, 2005; Madden et al., 2013), it is important for teachers to provide similar experiences in the classroom. Madison dedicates an entire chapter (Ch. 5) to describing a pilot project that was set up as a structured workshop to teach students about digital storytelling. Madison provides rich description about what happened at each stage of the workshop, but what is probably the most important resource for teachers wanting to “see” the workshop in action is skimmed over toward the end of the chapter (DigitalSkillsWorkshop.com). The author links this robust resource that uses a documentary-like approach to teacher professional development. However, it would likely be more valuable if it were listed in the “Resources” section at the end of the chapter.

Newsworthy is written to appeal to a practitioner-oriented audience, but there are a few ways in which it falls short. Chapter 1’s thorough explanation of the book’s theoretical background will likely lose or be overlooked by practitioners who are seeking curricular ideas instead of theoretical explanations of a pedagogical approach. Likewise, the integration of theory throughout the book seems as if it would be valued by an academic audience rather than a practitioner audience. Chapters 2-5 include a “Technology Tip” to help make learning in the ELA classroom more realistic and engaging. However, as someone working to integrate technology in K-12 settings, I find that some of the tips don’t appear to integrate technology in meaningful ways and/or require higher-order thinking from students. Finally, the nod to the professional development literature in Chapter 5 seems out of place; it would be better served as a more thorough section at the end of the chapter or in the book’s conclusion.

Despite these shortcomings, the book will still appeal to and captivate its intended audience. Teachers will find ideas that are aligned with the CCSS as well as grounded in the research-based pedagogical approach of journalistic learning. The book could certainly be integrated as a book study in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) because of its brevity, descriptive examples, and straightforward strategies for journalistic learning. Similarly, this book could be used by individual ELA teachers seeking new strategies to engage students in their classrooms. From reading to writing to speaking and listening, readers will find a concise collection of approaches to support learning in the ELA classroom.

Overall, *Newsworthy: Cultivating Critical Thinkers, Readers, and Writers in the Language*

Arts Classroom by Ed Madison investigates an important question: How can teachers use the pedagogical approach of journalistic learning to create meaningful learning experiences for students?

This book includes rich examples, instructional ideas, connections to the standards, and relevant resources to help practitioners understand the how and the why behind incorporating journalistic learning in their classrooms. As ELA teachers seek innovative strategies to engage students, this book will help support the discussion around using nontraditional approaches, such as journalistic learning, and provide teachers initial ideas to expand upon and adapt with the diverse groups of learners in their classrooms.

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