Book review

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Witte, S., Latham, D. and Gross, M. (eds.) 2019 *Literacy engagement through peritextual analysis*. Chicago: ALA Editions. 176pp. 978-0838917688. £42.99. Pbk.

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This book draws upon the theory of paratext by Gérard Genette which encompassed both the peritext (elements that are part of a work such as the title page, cover, author bio, references etc.) and epitext (elements that are outside of a work but in direct relation to it, such as book reviews and author websites). The editors of this title chose to focus solely on the peritext and its importance and value in developing a range of literacy skills such as visual, information and media. Peritext is defined in this title as 'the elements of a work that surround the main content and help to mediate between the work and its readers'. This is further subdivided into sections in the Peritextual Literacy Framework (PLF), these being: production, promotional, navigational, intratextual, supplemental and documentary. The PLF is visually outlined in an appendix to Chapter 1 (pp.14-15) with an adaptation for online news articles included in the appendix to Chapter 10 (pp.136-137).

The book is supported throughout with well described case studies which draw conclusions as to the effectiveness of the different examples using the PLF as a teaching tool as well as further applications and extensive notes to support the texts and research used. Both fiction and non-fiction texts are included in addition to online sources. It also covers a range of classroom ages and activities from Year 2 using dust jackets to consider the meaning of *Last Stop on Market Street* to 18 to19 year-olds considering the existentialist themes of Kafka's *Metamorphoses* using different cover art to deduce meaning. While all case studies take place in a US setting they are equally applicable to British classrooms. Although each section and indeed chapter can be read independently, reading the book chronologically allows for a greater understanding of the PLF and its numerous and varied applications.

The book is divided into four main sections.

I.   An overview of peritextual analysis
The opening section of the book considers the significance of the PLF and places it in the wider context of information literacy (IL). It contains a detailed case study by Don Latham outlining how the PLF can be used with young adult non-fiction to introduce awareness of author bias, reliability and navigational elements featured in the book to aid and enhance understanding which younger readers may not be familiar with.

II.   Strengthening visual literacy through peritextual analysis
Chapters 3-6 featured in this section see book covers being closely considered in a variety of different contexts by different age groups. Although this may seem at odds with the commonly held mantra of not judging a book by its cover, each chapter provides details of how visual cues can be taken from the cover to aid further questioning both before and during the reading of a text. Further activities as also referred to with students redesigning covers and blurbs being a frequent theme.

III.   Providing critical thinking opportunities through peritextual analysis

The third section of the book provides a very interesting reflection in Chapter 7 on how historical fiction can be used to inform understanding of not only historical events but modern day political issues. *Dreamland burning* by Jennifer Latham is used as the explorative text. Rebecca Weber and Kevin Dyke outline how the author note was analysed and conclusions drawn as to why it was featured at the end of the novel. The decision to frame the narrative as well as providing details on the author's own research and reasons for writing about this event was considered and reflected upon by students.

IV.   Peritextual analysis of nonprint texts

The last section of the book steers away from the printed word and instead concerns two case studies using visual media. The films of Disney and *Exit Through the Gift Shop: A Banksy Film* are unpacked using an adapted version of the PLF. The use of these two different case studies highlights the value to students of extending this approach beyond printed media and the overlap in the skill set in approaching different works.

One of the main strengths of this book is its readability. Each chapter is well laid out supported by clear signposting as to the reasons for the study, the researchers involved, a statement of the problem, literature review and the main study itself. Good use is made of supporting transcripts, pictures and surveys as appropriate. A particular highlight is Jill Slay's commentary in Chapter 4 detailing 'Book speed dating and the art of making lasting connections'. This draws upon a common activity in secondary school libraries and demonstrates how the PLF can be utilised to increase pupil engagement with their chosen books in addition to improving their skills in self selecting appropriate reading material. It outlines how students were initially guided through an analysis of visual images, in this instance film posters, to deduce meaning about the content of the films and their intended audience. This approach was then applied to book covers with consideration given to what could be inferred about the plot and genre of books with which the students were unfamiliar. Through comparing two different types of media this is just one example from this title where clear links have been drawn between the development and deepening of media literacy skills.

In conclusion, this book could easily be read in one afternoon. Some of the chapters may seem less applicable at first due to the ages of the students involved in a study or the content of the activities. However time should be taken to consider how these different case studies can be applied to a range of different texts, student ages and media types. Witte, Latham and Gross clearly demonstrate to both librarians and teachers throughout this title the importance and relevance of their Peritextual Literacy Framework as a teaching tool and the importance of developing a range of literacy skills.