Problematizing Yertle the Turtle, the Lorax, and Horton through critical literacy, global issues and Freire’s tenets

Abstract

Through the use of children’s literature, this thesis encourages educators and parents to expose children, from an early age to texts that promote critical thinking. In order to identify texts that do so, an evaluation tool was done to three Dr. Seuss books to identify if they portrayed McDaniel’s characteristics of critical literacy, three of Freire’s tenets, and Yakovchuk’s global issues. After each of the elements were identified in the Dr. Seuss’s books Yertle the Turtle, The Lorax and Horton Hears a Who!; the findings were critically analyzed using a holistic approach. As a result, these evaluations revealed that the three Dr. Seuss's books lend themselves to the use of critical pedagogy by presenting the characteristics of critical literacy, Freire’s tenets, and global issues. Ultimately, this thesis motivates educators and parents to choose books which encourage children to think critically and become active agents in their world.

Esta tesis provee a educadores y padres una herramienta de evaluación que puede ser utilizada para seleccionar textos que promuevan el pensamiento crítico. Dicha evaluación identifica once elementos en textos de niños: las características de alfabetización crítica establecidas por McDaniel, tres principios de Freire y los problemas globales presentados por Yakovchuk. Tres libros de Dr.
Yertle the Turtle was king of all that he can see, but that wasn’t enough for him, and started an absurd “tower” made with their fellow turtles, not caring if they weren’t able to sustain such kind of pointless endeavor. An important lesson: Tyrants keep their power as long as their people remain silent. Seuss was no stranger to morals and references to real-world issues. The former political cartoonist took on the Cold War in The Butter Battle Book, Richard Nixon in Marvin K. Mooney Will You Please Go Now!, and the environment in The Lorax. In my opinion Yertle is his best work, and one that I hope lives on with future generations. I spent all this space on Yertle the Turtle and I have yet to mention the “Turtles all the way down” theory of astronomy. The titular story revolves around a Yertle the Turtle, the king of the pond. Unsatisfied with the stone that serves as his throne, he commands the other turtles to stack themselves beneath him so that he can see further and expand his kingdom. However, the turtle at the bottom of the pile, named Mack, asks Yertle for a respite. Ignoring his request, Yertle commands more and more turtles to add to his throne, until he notices the moon rising above him as the night approaches. Furious that something “dares to be higher than Yertle the King”, he decides to call for even more turtles in