

## WinkWorld August 2002

Fox, M. (1993). Radical reflections: Passionate opinions on teaching, learning, and living. San Diego: Harcourt.

All language arts teachers should read *Radical Reflections: Passionate Opinions on Teaching, Learning, and Living* by Mem Fox. Although it was published in 1993, this book is especially relevant today when politicians, administrators, and the media are force-feeding us the message that children need more skills, more testing, and more back-to-the-basics memorization and facts. Mem Fox systematically and energetically describes how "real language" teaching (the art of teaching reading and writing in a real and meaningful way) accomplishes more in the long-term than worksheets and basal readers ever could.

I first "discovered" Mem Fox when I bought one of her children's books, *Time for Bed*. Since then, I have collected her books because they are so comforting and loving and inspirational to my children. In *Radical Reflections*, I learned why Fox writes what she does, why certain characters HAD to be female, why her books end the way they do, and why rhythm and repetition (and sometimes rhyme) are so important. More importantly, as a teacher, I appreciated Fox's decree that language arts teachers pick up the pen and write, that we read a lot and allow ourselves to be seen crying and laughing over our books, that we read aloud to students every day, that we give them meaningful writing assignments (not just stories) with real audiences in mind, and that we forget the reading textbooks and stacks of worksheets.

For me, it always comes down to my own children. Do I want them in a class that emphasizes small parts of language learning and drills and worksheets and boring books? Of course not, but this is happening in my son's school. What I really want is for my son and daughter to love school and devour books! I want them to care about their writing and know it will be appreciated! I want Mem Fox to be their teacher!

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