

R & D: a reading and language programme for the primary years

Jessie Reid and Margaret Donaldson

Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1986. Teacher's book (108 pp.), Language book (72 pp.), 4 information books and 6 story books

This is the fourth and final level of what has proved to be a very well-received reading and language programme, the first levels of which were reviewed in this journal in Vol. 1 No. 2. In many respects, the top junior year is the most difficult to handle, in linguistic and literary terms. Many of the children are emotionally and intellectually ready for senior school; others are well behind. It is also an uncertain linguistic period: developments in language learning are undoubtedly still taking place, but there has been little research into what they are.

The authors have wisely selected for special attention several of the higher-order linguistic skills, such as reading for detail, selecting main ideas, note-taking, summarizing, drafting, and redrafting. The basic theme of language AWARENESS continues to be addressed, and the children's stock of technical language terms is further increased. The names of the main parts of speech have already been introduced in Levels 1–3, and this approach is continued here, with the use of prepositions and conjunctions. The basic subject/predicate structure of sentences is now explained, as are the main elements of clause structure—subject, verb,

object, adverbial. Several sentence-varying processes are also shown (e.g. negation, fronting). Among the more general notions introduced are footnote, asterisk, parentheses, metaphor, ambiguity, review, definition, and abbreviation. As previously, the strategy is to introduce these technical language notions in a more general way, e.g. the general concept of 'structure' is presented before the notion of sentence structure. Again, as previously, the various formal teaching points are selectively emphasized in the story and information books.

This fourth level confirms me in my impression that this is the best language-awareness programme currently available for this age range; it is full of ideas that could be adapted for use by teachers working with the language-impaired population.