

Uncle Arthur's posthumous rejoinder¹

Arthur Maxwell (1896-1970)

Author of *Uncle Arthur's bedtime stories*

Introduction

One person sees a vase, another sees two black faces looking at each other. Another image: Is it a fashionable young lady or an old woman? In classic figure/ground visual perception experiments, viewers' 'perceptual sets' and their personal interests, including emphasising some shapes and contours, may strengthen one 'interpretation' more than the other, according to psychologists.

The article critiquing my *Bedtime stories*, published in a recent issue of *Teach journal of Christian education*,² appears to focus on only one interpretation, an imbalance that I believe needs addressing. I acknowledge the critique's generosity (however muted) regarding certain aspects of the *Bedtime stories* series and take note of some of the perceived weaknesses in my children's texts. Notwithstanding that Nicholls and Reynaud write from the vantage point of the 21st century and with hindsight, there is merit in scrutinising the validity of some of their arguments. Before embarking on this task, however, it seems instructive to provide some general context through reflecting and personal reminiscing.

Context

In writing *Bedtime stories*, I have always endeavoured to affirm and promote biblical values, by challenging and encouraging children to choose the narrow and hard way that, as Jesus said, leads to life. Thus, all of the stories clearly intended to embody character-building lessons, as explained in the preface of each volume. Reading or listening to the stories was also intended to give children joy and create a sense of wonder; even lead to thinking about how people behave and how a loving God fits into the 'big picture' of the world in which children, their families and communities live. Foremost, it should be remembered that the stories were written for children and not for a deconstruction exercise.

I recognise that authors don't live their lives in vacuums. Their texts are cultural products or artefacts; i.e. they are products of particular cultural, social, political, historical and individual milieus. Authors and their texts reflect this in varying degrees (an issue my critics don't give

much attention to). I must concede that some of my stories—others would say, many—are a product of the spirit and culture of late 19th century Victorian England; a culture in which I spent some of my formative years and which stands in stark contrast to post-modernity—the defining cultural state of contemporary society. Interestingly, a Chinese proverb reminds us that the last thing that fish discover is water; an analogical reference to our personal and collective reality that is often comprised of composite layers of unquestioned norms and cultural blind spots. I plead guilty; and it seems reasonable to claim that my critics are equally 'culture bound'.

My last book of stories was authored more than forty years ago and the world has seen dramatic socio-political, economic, environmental and technological changes since then, presenting today's children with a set of entirely new challenges. I am acutely aware that 'new wine' calls for 'new literary wineskins'. However, the principles and biblical values encapsulated by *Bedtime stories* are still relevant today.

Constructive critiques of children's literature texts should not be ignored. The *Bedtime stories* series has been seriously faulted on numerous grounds by Nicholls and Reynaud. The question is: Is the offered criticism valid?

The use of critical literacy to view *Uncle Arthur's bedtime stories*

Critical literacy is not a discrete category of literary analysis.³ It may be perceived as functioning on a continuum ranging from 'reflective-rational' to 'radical-extreme'. I readily concede the educational value, often in school settings, of examining print, visual, social and political texts with searching questions such as outlined on school education authorities' curriculum websites; for example: "Why am I/are we reading this text? Who benefits from this text? What is the text about? What view of the world is the text presenting? How do I feel about the text? How many interpretations of the text are possible?"⁴ However, my support for such 'structuring' is not unconditional. At the core of any credible analysis, at whatever cognitive level, is the compatibility (the 'fit') between the issue(s) being investigated and the methodological approach

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employed. On that basis, I propose that the validity of many of my critics' conclusions may be questioned.

In the first instance, *Bedtime stories* should be viewed, I believe, through the innocence of children's eyes (despite their naïveté) rather than through the lens of critical literacy; Nicholls and Reynaud have done the latter. While it might be asserted, they are entitled to a 'free reading'—'against the grain'—and that literary critics do not need to explain their adopted approach, Colin Greene and Stephen Holmes revealingly point out,

[M]ethodology is not an indifferent net—it catches what it intends to catch... [furthermore] socio-scientific analysis and description are *not value-neutral*, but are undertaken from a variety of committed positions, with the implicit values determining the fields of investigation *and the results*⁵ (emphases added).

There is thus a real danger that some methodologies or approaches—notably as they become more dominant paradigms—rather than yielding significant insights merely become vehicles for driving particular agendas, embodying their own *overt and covert* perspectives. American educational philosopher Maxine Greene hence warns of the possibility of critical praxis itself being “a colonising and patronising practice [that is] distinctly male and Euro-centric in tone.”⁶

The use of different literary lenses—particularly radical ones—results not only in different foci, but, more importantly, in different pictures of the world. What kind of worlds would we encounter if we engaged in a feminist reading of *Little red riding hood*, a Marxist critique of Jesus' parable of *The workers in the vineyard*, or a Freudian interpretation of Hans Christian Andersen's, *The emperor's new clothes*? It could be claimed that we might gain some new insights. On the other hand, a 'Freudian world' of human relations, for example, could turn out to be extremely narrow and distorted. A case in point is Mem Fox's, *Feathers and fools*—a delightful story about peacocks, swans and the horribleness and futility of war. The internationally famous Australian author of children's books, when informed that according to postmodernist critics her children's text was, “a skilful piece of propaganda for the cause of male supremacy”, told *The weekend Australian* that she found this view enraging. “It just drives you mad”, she said; “it really does.”⁷ It is evident that advocates of critical literacy may end up with serious ‘refractive distortions’ of reality, when they use the methodology as a prism through, or a mirror in which they view life.

A pertinent and severe assessment of critical literacy (targeting the radical end of the continuum) is made in an article in the *Yearbook of the Irish Philosophical Society*:

In a work significantly titled *The limits of interpretations* (1990), Umberto Eco complained—in my view, rightly—of ‘a general tendency’ in recent critical studies to legitimise a ‘free reading’ which cedes the initiative to ‘the will of the interpreters’ The literary text, thus manipulated by the interpretive will, is forced to give up its aesthetic autonomy. As an example of this manipulative will, [post-modern philosopher] Richard Rorty, apparently without disapproval, refers to a critic who ‘asks neither the author nor the text about their intentions, but simply beats the text into shape which will suit his own purpose’. The idiom of violence here is striking: ignoring any possibility that the text may possess a degree of objective inviolability as object-in-itself, the critic feels free to commit ideological rape, mastering the text and making it serve his/her own agenda.⁸

The above carries echoes from Lewis Carroll's, *Through the looking glass*:

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more or less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “*which is to be master—that's all*”⁹ (emphasis added).

Critical theories of literacy provide us with a *socio-political* picture of the world. They appreciably draw on and have been greatly influenced by critical social theory which asserts that:

Meanings are always contested (never givens), and are related to ongoing struggles in society for the possession of knowledge, power, status, and material resources. These struggles over meaning and resources are undertaken by unequal groups. That is, certain groups have the advantage in such struggles because they have maintained control over society's ideologies, institutions, and practices.¹⁰

Central and foremost to a critical literacy reading of a text, according to Cervetti et al., are “issues of power and explicitly attend[ing] to differences across race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and so on.”¹¹ These are regarded as indicators of systemic injustices and legitimate ‘*leitmotifs*’ for critical literacy. Hence texts, “being products of ideological and socio-political forces, must be continually subjected to methods of social critique.”¹² Unsurprisingly, such an interrogative stance taken by critical literacy has been referred to as “the hermeneutics of suspicion.”¹³ Texts are thus perceived as

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akin to 'Trojan horses' with the potential of breaching readers' cognitive defences and either surreptitiously indoctrinating or 'tranquillising' them; ergo the 'need' for critical literacy and its taking on the role of 'literary umpire'.

Unless Nicholls and Reynaud advocate 'selective application', critical literacy's consistent acceptance and application simultaneously would also seriously undermine the truth claims of Scripture. The promise of *openness of meaning* that critical literacy offers may alternately turn into unconditional relativism and extreme subjectivity and hold all spiritual truths 'hostage' to context and culture. The epistemological and ontological assumptions of critical literacy are outlined in the literature:

What counts as knowledge is not natural or neutral; [it] is always based on the discursive rules of a particular community, and is thus ideological. Reality cannot be known definitely, and cannot be captured by language; decisions about truth, therefore, cannot be based on a theory of correspondence with reality, but must instead be made locally.¹⁴

Responding to criticism

1. Damaging religious effects

Nicholls and Reynaud cited negative testimonial evidence, such as that from McNiely [sic]—an unlisted reference—that attributes tension and loss of confidence and faith to her interaction with *Uncle Arthur's bedtime stories*. This genuinely concerns me. It is hoped that such experiences are rare exceptions. Given the datum of (assumedly) McNeily's¹⁵ cognitive dissonance when coming face-to-face with tragedy during her childhood, it is questionable whether her *specific* experience can be generalised to a larger population. Hence it seems ironic that the critique cites *selective sampling* as one of the shortcomings of my stories.

Almost all the feedback I have received from children and adults is very positive. The recent online comments by Summer Edward that encompass childhood memories as well as adult reflections are a typical example. She describes my stories as "didactic to say the least, but also entertaining,"¹⁶ and recalls:

I particularly remember one story in which Maxwell writes about his real-life experience of being caught by an incoming tide while walking between two islands. I remember being gripped by the suspense of that story when I read it years ago... Although the books are often described as teaching "Christian values", I reread some of the stories earlier today (found them online) and don't find them overly indoctrinating at all. I certainly didn't grow up in a Seventh-day Adventist home



and as a child the stories didn't leave a very religious impression on me, although I remember that in many of the stories children would pray to be better boys and girls and the like.¹⁷

Written for children (not adults), the *Bedtime stories* give due consideration to children's developmental stages. Developmental literature¹⁸ recognises that when quality of care and maternal relationship during infancy and later childhood "inspires *trust and security*, the child experiences confidence in engaging and exploring the world"¹⁹ (emphasis added). Christina Belcher, drawing on her own personal teaching experience with a secondary school class, reports that when questioned as to what the students most desired at their age, "the answer to my question was, *an adult they could trust*."²⁰

The texts are not about shielding children from the real world. Instead, the issue is one of *developmental and age appropriateness*. Indeed, "there is a right time for everything"²¹; including coming to terms with, why bad things happen to good people and similarly, why the rain is sent to fall on both the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). A perusal of *Bedtime stories*—take for instance "The boy who refused a future", (in book 22) which describes an alcohol-fuelled assault on a woman and her two young children—should reveal that I touch on poverty, disability, adversity, family dysfunction, and emotional pain, but do not *dwell* on them.

Most parents/carers (or classroom teachers) do not introduce their children to situations of distress, doubt, tragedy or seeming contradictions—whether real or imagined—at an early age. An

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increase in the level of anxiety may not be helpful, particularly just before bedtime. Correspondingly, airlines do not screen in-flight episodes of *Air crash investigations!*²² Thus, it should not be surprising that my stories portray the world as ‘friendly’ and present God as a loving Heavenly Father who can be trusted, who cares, and is aware of our fears and human anxieties; “a god of particular providence [who] knows the number of hairs on your head,”²³ rather than a disinterested and cold person, far removed and disengaged from children’s everyday lives; i.e. a non-interventionist God. That decision aligns with developmental theory in general and does not rule out introducing children—when they are ready—to exploring cases of *unanswered* prayer. It is generally accepted that younger children, even some adults, are incapable of dialectical thinking. It “integrates dimensions of contradiction, change and system-transformation... when structures undergirding their sense of self/world coherence are challenged.”²⁴

Further, this position is supported by psychologist James Fowler’s influential *Stages of faith*,²⁵ which, drawing on the work of Piaget, Kohlberg and Erikson, posits six stages of faith. He contends that ‘stage 1 faith’, *intuitive-projective faith*, (typical of 3–7 year olds) is magical, imaginative, and illogical and abounds in fantasy, particularly about God’s power. During the next stage of faith development, *mythic-literal faith*, (typical of middle childhood, ages seven to pre-adolescence), “The individual takes the myths and stories of religion literally and believes simplistically in the power of symbols. In a religious context, this stage usually involves reciprocity: God sees to it that those who follow his laws are rewarded and that those who do not are punished.”²⁶

Each stage has its proper time of ascendancy. For persons in a given stage at the right time *for their lives*, the task is the full realisation and integration of the strengths and graces of that stage rather than rushing on to the next stage. Each stage has the potential for wholeness, grace and integrity, and for strengths sufficient for either life’s blows or blessings.²⁷

My critics object to a child’s simplified and unambiguous moral order in which good and bad actions are swiftly responded to. Instead, they advance their own view on how children’s faith development *should* proceed—framed within an *adult* moral universe—using, in some respects, critical literacy to underpin it. Early childhood educators would not try to overlay a child’s perception of ‘conservation of mass’ with their adult view, even though the child’s limited comprehension

does not correspond with reality. Given time and experience, however, a fuller understanding should develop.

2. Damaging social effects

Nicholls and Reynaud also criticised *Bedtime stories* because the text was used to justify the views of white supremacists. Such an extreme reading, I believe, is an unwarranted inclusion in the critique and requires a firm rebuttal. While my early texts in particular—including the illustrations—lack a broad multi-cultural dimension, the suggestion that my stories ‘lend support’ to racist propaganda, is clearly one of ‘guilt by association’. Using the same ‘logic’, it could be argued that John Eldredge’s book, *Wild at heart*²⁸, is responsible for the pathological killings and horrific crimes of narco-terrorists in Mexico.²⁹ For someone to co-opt another’s text, assuming it for their own nefarious purposes, does *not* constitute a ‘cause and effect’ link. Consequently, such tenuous claims should not be given any credibility.

3. Author–reader concerns

Writing texts such as *Bedtime stories* involves several challenges. How should authors engender mutual trust between parents/carers and children as well as take on a mentoring role that fosters biblical values of hope, love, honesty, compassion, selflessness, responsibility and obedience etc. without being perceived as “patriarchally authoritative [and assuming] a significant God-like presence in the texts?”³⁰ The danger of being caricatured becomes obvious.

Nicholls and Reynaud suggest that my editing of stories caused confusion over objectivity by blurring the demarcation between fact and fiction. I can only respond by repeating what I have previously publicly stated. The stories that are sent to me by children are edited to reflect their personal ‘true-to-life’ experiences. Essentially, except for some enhancements of expression and structure, they are narratives *by children, of children, for children*. That being the case, it is not entirely unexpected that many may be categorised in the genre of ‘classic realism’. Furthermore, it is more common for children to relate positive prayer experiences, rather than share negative ones; a trend which I did not discourage. The following is a fair representation of my situation:

Because he was seeking to strengthen the faith of the young, he emphasised the positive. Significantly, Maxwell presented only one or two such stories in his first ten books but the number increased to nearly two-thirds of the stories in the final volumes, possibly the result of an increased response from his readers.³¹

4. Simplifying the complexities of life

My critics focus on truth being a ‘casualty’ in *Bedtime stories*. As evidence, they cite examples of simplification of circumstances, presentation of a sanitised world and use of linear ‘cause and effect’ stories, in which good is rewarded and transgression punished. First, I point out that it seems an oxymoron that critical literacy, steeped in post-modernism, would entertain the notion of ‘truth’, given that by definition, “the meaning of a text [and by implication ‘truth’] is dependent on the perspective of the one who enters into dialogue with it; it has as many meanings as it has readers (or readings).”³² Second, I refer back to ‘developmental and age appropriateness’ and the arguments of Ireland and Fowler to rebut the critics’ claims and their disparaging of my G-rated children’s texts. Thus, one may justifiably decide to ignore certain narratives in the book of *Judges*, overlook some details of the Passion Week, and not dwell on specifics of the punishment of the wicked in The Final Judgement. As children grow into adolescents and employ abstract thinking, they are ready to test and expand their view of the world. The Apostle Paul’s words seem fitting in this context.

When I was a child I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I became a man my thoughts grew far beyond those of my childhood, and now I have put away the childish things. In the same way, we can see and understand only a little about God now, as if we were peering at his reflection in a poor mirror; but someday we are going to see him in his completeness, face to face (1 Cor. 13:11–12, LB).

Further, it is asserted that in my role as self-appointed teacher and transmitter of truth and values, I become complicit in presenting and perpetuating a narrow perspective of life and an unjust world. To encourage children to show compassion is one thing, to sensitise them to radical suffering must wait until they are older and sufficiently mature to deal with it—emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Jill Ireland, citing Kate Legge and child psychologist Valerie Yule, agrees that youngsters even older than my target audience are overexposed to ‘dysfunctional’ life by school texts.

Young readers are faced with problems, troubles and tragedies for which no solution is offered. Her review of the books’ endings found that less than a quarter of the conclusions might be considered life-affirming. Yule’s research on reverse censorship raised the problem of authors desensitising readers and then turning up “the literary cattle prod”: The major problem is imbalance. Young people are being given too much of what is horrible and not enough of what is good...Adolescents of

previous times...have had greater freedom...to relish ideals, nobility, happiness and the human spirit that can triumph in the dust.³³

But then, of course, advocates of critical literacy would have us think otherwise.

5. Unanswered prayer

I move on to the question of, What about unanswered prayer? Agreed; God is not some kind of ‘warm and fuzzy’ Santa Claus who is instantly ready to attend to our every whim and fancy, or as Elena King, when a high school graduate, recalls: “I mistakenly thought of God as a genie, someone who would grant my wishes when I rubbed the magic lamp.”³⁴ To reinforce a Santa Claus or a genie portrayal of God is certainly contrary to children’s long-term spiritual interests. Yet Jeremiah 29:11–13 and, more importantly, Jesus in all the four Gospels provide us with portraits of an incredibly generous God—his Father, our Father. The apostle John is equally encouraging.

We have such confidence in him that we are certain that he hears every request that is made in accord with his own plan. And since we know that he invariably gives his attention to our prayers, whatever they are about, we can be quite sure that our prayers will be answered (1 John 5:14,15; J.B. Phillips).

Jesus himself models how we are to approach our Heavenly Father in prayer. “Not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22:42, KJV) not only shows Jesus’ spirit of humility and submission, but also suggests that not every prayer will be answered just as we request. Children must learn, over time, that there may be ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘wait’ answers. Just as children must be able to walk before they can attempt to run, physically; so in their spiritual lives they ordinarily begin to walk by sight rather than faith, before they learn to reverse that order.

Dale Robbins proposes a range of common reasons for unanswered prayer;³⁵ extending from a lack of fellowship with God and improper motives, to wavering faith and lack of perseverance. As children mature, they begin to understand that many promises of Scripture are not unqualified and that there may be more than one answer to our (often selfish) prayers, according to his wisdom and love for us. Therefore, in the area of prayer, it makes sense to me that we do not require children to run, before they have learned to walk. Moreover, as children grow into teenagers and young adults, they begin to realise that in their prayer life it will take maturity “to seek the heart and will of God.” This often means that they, like many Christians, as Will Davis points out, will have to learn to pray for grace to prevail through the storms of life rather than be rescued from them.³⁶ To come

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to terms with severe distress is difficult enough for adults, let alone children. Lasting solace and comfort can only be found in Jesus, in whose crucifixion we see “God’s suffering solidarity with the world.”³⁷

6. The lesson index

My critics interpret the lesson index provided in *Bedtime stories* as ‘priming’ the reader for the text, thus prescribing and limiting its reading. Nothing could be farther from the intention of the author and publisher. The index merely serves as a quick convenient user-guide (particularly for unchurched readers or new Christians) which is standard for many texts. For instance, *The teen study Bible* has on its inside cover ‘stems’ (e.g. “I like to read the Bible when I’m feeling ...”) to which teens may respond, while at the back, an alphabetical subject index gives the page numbers for topics from A to Z: alcohol; blessings; conscience; discouragement; ecology; etc.³⁸ To regard this practice as authorial manipulation, is to ‘draw a very long bow’ indeed.

7. Uncle Arthur as Jesus

That I become a ‘proxy’ for Jesus may be perceived as the grossest claim made by my critics. It is maintained that the assimilation of Uncle Arthur into the image of Jesus is achieved through the particular use of language and in pictorial representations that show me in an armchair—a central position, similar to one Jesus occupies in other pictures—telling a story to a small group of attentive children; some on my knees and others on the floor. It is evident that the artists, such as Harry Anderson and Harry Baerg, painted ‘communication scenes’ with respective roles

for speaker and listeners that are akin to what occurs routinely in thousands of kindergarten classes in faith-based schools, where teachers relate biblical or moral narratives to interested children. Are these educators also engaged in elevating themselves into positions that only Christ should occupy, or does critical literacy, in this instance, lead to quixotic tilting at sinister shadows and windmills?

Conclusion

In essence, Nicholls and Reynaud find *Uncle Arthur’s bedtime stories* guilty on several counts, primarily:

- **Indoctrination**—if not, then at least colonisation—which is accomplished in the texts through exercising a power relationship over children, and controlling knowledge available to them.
- **Sanitisation**—a form of censorship—that fails to expose or acquaint young readers with the ‘dark’ side of life and, in a cowardly fashion, leaving it to existentialists.
- **Misrepresentation**—namely, “the potential effect [of Uncle Arthur’s texts] ... is to discredit faith, prayer and God”³⁹ ... in the spiritual lives of young Christians.

My extended responses to these allegations may be summarised, as follows:

First, the critics in their ideological quest to apply critical literacy have endeavoured to claim the ‘high ground’ of text analysis and evaluation. They have done this by assuming the role of “brokers of meaning,”⁴⁰ simultaneously and conveniently discarding or ignoring significant aspects of children’s emotional, moral and faith development—with which my stories align—in an unjustified preference for a socio-political view of the world that has its own agenda.

Second, I call into question the logic that is used to make *Bedtime stories* the basis for a specific case of racism.

Third, it is argued that the inclination, ‘prematurely’, to expose children to or acquaint them with examples of pain and suffering in texts, or in real life, is not prudent and potentially damaging.

Fourth, ‘putting to the test’ children’s faith as expressed in their prayers and questioning the whole ‘enterprise’ of prayer is counterproductive to the growth of Christian spirituality; particularly for young children. This should not negate or impair future explorations of how prayer works.

Last, I reject out of hand the motives that are imputed to me and the publishers in dealing with children. I consider the critics’ perceptions of manipulation, subterfuge, usurpation and

tampering with the truth as the upshot of employing hermeneutics of suspicion. Of course, in the final analysis, readers will make their own decision regarding the validity of my critics' case.

Epilogue

If presented with the science fiction opportunity to rewind the clock, would I make major changes to the *Bedtime stories* series, having the benefit of Nicholl's and Reynaud's critique? The short answer is, "probably not", given the then-pervading reader cultural expectations. However, one can always learn and grow as a storyteller and connect more effectively with readers. Worthy minor changes and fine-tuning might have included: a greater 'economy' of miraculous events, unanswered selfish prayers, resilience in the face of difficulty and postponed answers to prayer. There could also have been fewer mono-cultural stories and illustrations and a better balance between 'ordinary' and 'prayer' stories.

In concluding, I want to refer to a matter where my critics and I appear to be in closest agreement. The act of offering our prayers to God, whether by children or adults, is not akin to operating a heavenly slot machine that dispenses the most wonderful variety of 'bubble gum' miracles. I acknowledge that unless children, over time, are nurtured to grow in this area, there is the real danger that they later become 'believers' who are fittingly described as, "those who treat God as their servant, rather than they being His servants. They demand of Him to do as they want and act as they think He should; they bind Him to their cause; they manipulate Him into keeping them happy, comfortable and well fed."⁴¹

Jesus challenges His disciples to a much higher calling: A rich, loving and meaningful relationship with Him—and the people who inhabit our planet—that is not linked to "His approval or His rewards but love and gratitude for all He has done and praise for all that He is."⁴² That is the even bigger picture to which the *Bedtime stories* series, however imperfect, has been trying to contribute. **TEACH**

Endnotes

¹ The writer has used the pseudonym Arthur Maxwell to give 'life' to the article. As is customary, the writer's name and autobiographical details have been provided to the editor.

² Nicholls, R. and Reynaud, D. (2010). An ideological reading of *Uncle Arthur's bedtime stories* using critical literacy. *TEACH Journal of Christian Education*, 4(1), 47–52.

^{3,4} For example refer to <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/english/> Retrieved on January 3, 2011.

⁵ Holmes, S. (Ed.), (2008). *Public theology in cultural engagement*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, pp. 30; x.

⁶ Greene, M. (1993). Foreword. In Lankshear, C. and McLaren, P. *Critical literacy: Politics, praxis and the postmodern*. Albany, NY: State University of New York, p. 49.

⁷ "Postmodern" nonsense invades Australian schools. Retrieved February 23, 2011 from <http://majorityrights.com/index.php/weblog/comments/postm>

⁸ Cosgrove, B. (2004). Critical disinterestedness and ideological commitment: An impasse? *Yearbook of the Irish Philosophical Society*. Dublin: Irish Philosophical Society, pp. 16–26.

⁹ Carroll, L. (2007 edition). *Alice's adventures in wonderland; and Through the looking glass and what Alice found there*. London: Vintage Books.

^{10, 11, 12} Cervetti, G., Pardales, M. and Damico, J. (2001). A tale of differences: Comparing the traditions, perspectives, and educational goals of critical reading and critical literacy. *Reading Online*, 4(9). Retrieved on August 20, 2010 from <http://www.readingonline.org/articles/cervetti/>

¹³ A term often associated with French philosopher Paul Ricoeur.

¹⁴ Cervetti, G., et al., op. cit.

¹⁵ McNeily, L. (1996). Uncle Arthur's God and the missionary experience. *Spectrum*, 25(4), 64.

^{16, 17} Comments posted on July 29, 2009 by Summer Edwards. Retrieved on July 27, 2010 from http://www.well-lovedtales.blogspot.com/2009_07_01_archive.html

¹⁸ For example, see Berk, L. (2007). *Development through the lifespan*. New York: Allyn and Bacon, pp. 184–206.

¹⁹ Berger, K. (1998). *The developing person through the lifespan*. Lincoln, NE: Worth Publishers, p. 199.

²⁰ Belcher, C. (2004). The dance of storytelling through picture books. In Jill Ireland, Richard Edlin and Ken Dickens (Eds.). *Pointing the way: Directions for Christian education in a new millennium*. Blacktown, NSW: National Institute for Christian Education, p. 78.

²¹ Ecclesiastes 3:1, *Living Bible*.

²² A popular TV series.

²³ Dembski, W. (2009). *The end of Christianity: Finding a good God in an evil world*. Nashville, TE: B&H Publishing Group, pp. 8, 9.

²⁴ Basseches, M. (2005). The development of dialectical thinking as an approach to integration. *Integral Review*, 1, 47–63.

²⁵ Fowler, J. (1995). *Stages of faith*. San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins.

²⁶ Berger, K., op. cit., p. 498.

²⁷ Fowler, J. quoted in Berger, K. (1998), p. 499.

²⁸ Eldredge, J. (2001). *Wild at heart: Discovering the secret of a man's soul*. Nashville, TE: Thomas Nelson.

²⁹ See Padgett, T. and Grillo, I. (2010). Mexico's meth warriors. *Time*, 175(25), 24–27.

³⁰ Nicholls and Reynaud, op. cit. p. 49.

³¹ Jean, E. (1983). Uncle Arthur: Master storyteller. *Adventist Heritage*, 8(2), 23–32.

³² Grenz, S. (1996). *A primer on postmodernism*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, p. 6.

³³ Ireland, J. (2004). The Christian mind and children's literature. In Jill Ireland et al. (Eds.). *Pointing the way: Directions for Christian education in a new millennium*. Blacktown, NSW: NICE, p. 66.

³⁴ King, E. (2010). I call Him my God. *Adventist Review*, 187(33), 23.

³⁵ Robbins, D. Unanswered prayers: Common reasons why. Retrieved August 31, 2010 from <http://www.victorious.org/unprayer.htm>

³⁶ Davis, W. (2007). *Pray big*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, pp. 93, 94.

³⁷ Bauckham, R. (2001). Juergen Moltman. In Ford, D. (Ed.). *The modern theologians*. Oxford: Blackwell, p. 211.

³⁸ *The teen study Bible*, NIV (1993). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan

³⁹ Nicholls and Reynaud, op. cit. p. 52.

⁴⁰ A term used by Klein, N. (2000). *No logo*. New York, NY: Picador, pp. 21–22. Cited in Tom Sine (2008). *The new conspirators*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.

^{41, 42} Bainbridge, G. (2009). Who serves whom? In *The Emmanuel who is God*. Alexandria, NSW: New Morning Publishers.

“Would I make major changes to the *Bedtime stories* series, having the benefit of Nicholl's and Reynaud's critique? The short answer is, 'probably not'”