

# Writing superheroes - contemporary childhood, popular culture, and classroom literacy

Teachers College Press - Writing Superheroes: Contemporary Childhood, Popular Culture, and Classroom Literacy — University of Illinois Urbana

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 Writing superheroes - contemporary childhood, popular culture, and classroom literacy

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"Welcome to the Jam": Popular Culture, School Literacy, and the Making of Childhoods

ANNE HAN DYSON

Michigan State University, East Lansing

In this ethnographic study of a group of African American first graders, Anne Han Dyson illustrates the textual process -- the deliberate manipulation of popular cultural material -- involved in the children's school practice as digital children and good pupils. This new process changed the way the children must write and be seen to participate in school literacy. The observed children did not approach official literacy activities in their classroom as though they had nothing to do with their own childhoods. They made use of familiar media-influenced practices and symbols available to the institutional and social actors in the official school world. Dyson offers a fresh perspective on children's experiences with popular media, emphasizing that they are an integral aspect of contemporary childhoods, not an external threat. Moreover, she presents an alternative view of the pathways and mechanisms through which children draw upon their literacy practices, one that illuminates how children build from the very social and symbolic world of their own institutions.

Last night we were told we'd be singing "I Wanna Be Like You" (from the movie *Steel Dawn*). She has this voice. She has that song.

"I Wanna Be Like You" (from the movie *Steel Dawn*)

"Millions of kids entered a time-like state, experiencing a gravitational pull to a movie, starring Ray and Michael Jordan" (Dyson, 1997). That is the story that a device that big money conglomerates use for "contemporary literacy" -- an elective one constructed on the movie *Steel Dawn*. "A happy marriage of good ideas . . . [that] transforms kids . . . [and] a fairly recent movie to the best movie" (Dyson, 1997), creates a version of the same film. Despite their conflicting views, both reviewers assumed a common social stance toward the

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**Writing Superheroes: Contemporary Childhood, Popular Culture, and Classroom Literacy, Anthropology & Education Quarterly**

. The stories in the book offer children identities as powerful people who do battle against evil and win, but they also reveal limiting ideological assumptions about relations between people--boys and girls, adults and children, people of varied heritages, physical demeanors, and social classes. An intriguing case study of how young children engage with and manipulate existing texts in their own play and writing, with a focus on superheroes like the X-men and the Ninja Turtles and how these texts play out in terms of gender.

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New York: Teachers College Press, 1997. . New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1997.

**Writing Superheroes: Contemporary Childhood, Popular Culture, and Classroom ...**

Best book I've read by far this semester. .

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**Writing Superheroes: Contemporary Childhood, Popular Culture, and Classroom ...**

And makes me want to write stories about going to Pizza Hut with the X-Men, too. The stories, however, also reveal limiting ideological assumptions about relations between people-boys and girls, adults and children, people of varied heritages, physical demeanors, and social classes. Based on an ethnographic study in an urban classroom of 7- to 9-year olds, Writing Superheroes: Contemporary Childhood, Popular

Culture, and Classroom Literacy examines how young school children use popular culture, especially superhero stories, in the unofficial peer social world and in the official school literary curriculum.

## Related Books

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