



The Constructivist Metaphor: Reading, Writing, and the Making of Meaning

By Nancy Nelson Spivey

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"The Constructivist Metaphor" presents a major reconsideration of constructivist theory through an applied examination of the ways in which people create meaning for texts. Spivey first delineates major constructivist positions from the early 20th century, including Frederic Bartlett's description of the discourse processes of individuals, small groups, and large communities. Then she concentrates on reading and writing processes as they were variously perceived throughout the 1970s and 1980s. These cultural and cognitive avenues of investigation provide an essential starting point for her presentation of the late 20th century approaches to the generative, organizational, and selective nature of human communication. The work illustrates an integrative conception of discourse, placing cognitive activity in relation to the text while assuming a social orientation encompassing both composition and comprehension. It describes constructivist concepts in terms of their similarities and differences. It applies theoretical positions to case studies in reading and writing and presents conclusions useful to scholars working on issues of comprehension and communication.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The breadth of her book captures the integration and importance that Spivey has brought to examining the transformations that occur when writers (as readers) construct meaning and what transformations occur between their reading (others) to write and reading their own writing."

--COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION, 12/97.

"The power of Spivey's analysis draws as much force from the particularities of her portrait as from the sheer scope of the creation and the panorama it portrays. Literary analysis, deconstruction, social constructionism, poststructuralism, and the like are framed within its brimming borders. But the volume's resonance owes equally to the details of its image, its capacity to creatively synthesize such diverse contributions and recognize within them some common projects."

--Greg J. Neimeyer, in CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGY (1998, volume 43, no. 10)

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Nancy Nelson Spivey of Louisiana State University has focused her attention for the past decade on theoretical issues indiscourse, comprehension, and composition, and has conducted research in processes of discourse synthesis--acts of literacy that involve reading multiple texts to write ones own. Her work in discourse synthesis was recognized with awards from the International Reading Association and Phi Delta Kappa. For several years before going to LSU, she directed a project examining the nature of students academic writing for the National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy at the University of California at Berkeley and at Carnegie Mellon University, while she was on the faculty of the English Department at Carnegie Mellon. At LSU she teaches graduate courses in discourse processes and literacy education in the College of Education and is affiliated with the Project in Curriculum Theory.

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