

Francine Falk-Ross, US
Professor, Pace University, New York
ffalkross@pace.edu

**Taking a critical stance toward evaluating themes in trade books:
Preservice teachers' perspectives**

The researchers engaged in this action research study in order to challenge the PSTs to take a more critical stance as they select children's literature and guide literature discussions, consistent with the conceptualisation of Freire (2000) and others (Comber & Simpson, 2001; Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002) who find that critical literacy challenges readers to be actively engaged in the reading process by questioning, analysing, and resisting the messages in the texts.

As part of two literacy methods classes, a critical literacy framework, *Five Key Questions* (<http://www.medialit.org>), was adapted to challenge pre-service teachers (PSTs) in their analysis of children's literature texts. Altogether, 72 PSTs participated in the lessons with elementary and middle-grade students. Results from the PSTs' open responses indicated their hesitancy to confront these issues in classroom instruction and also highlighted their heightened awareness of the implicit messages communicated by some children's literature texts, as well as enabling PSTs to examine children's literature in ways they had not previously considered. We describe outcomes of the implementation from a media analysis framework.