

The Ultimate Tool for Teaching Writing

Review of *The Power of Pictures: Creating Pathways to Literacy Through Art*

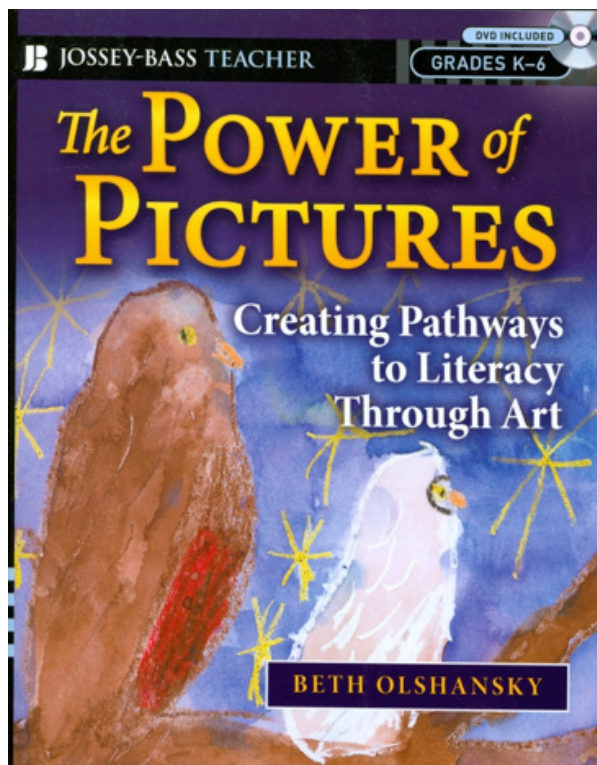
(book/DVD)

by *Beth Olshansky (Jossey-Bass)*

Nearly two decades ago, Beth Olshansky started a quiet revolution designed to overthrow the traditional verbal bias that drives our educational system. By recognizing, honoring, and celebrating the natural relationship between words and pictures, Beth has given voice to those students who have been stymied by the writing process for years. Her two 'pictures first' literacy models, *Image-Making Within The Writing Process* and *Picturing Writing: Fostering Literacy Through Art*, place struggling student writers where they've never been before: in a position of power!

For years teachers have been directed to differentiate instructional strategies in order to reach the diverse learners in their classrooms, yet most of the prescriptive techniques offered to them have remained dogmatic and joyless. Beth Olshansky's art-based literacy models not only put pleasure into the equation, they result in a whole that is vastly greater than the sum of its two parts. The technique that Beth has perfected for enabling students to create collage illustrations results in images that are truly breathtaking. As a result, students find that rich, descriptive words spring into their heads when they sit down to write about what they've created.

In *The Power of Pictures*, Beth describes her two research-based models in an exquisitely detailed, logical, sequential format that is richly sprinkled with anecdotal illustrations. She has left no stone unturned. For those who need convincing,



quantitative results of field studies are provided, as well as a theoretical base that references Gardner, Bandura, and Vygotsky, among others.

For those who want to cut right to the chase, Beth offers detailed descriptions of the various components of her model including using professionally published picture books as studies, shifting traditionally held 'verbocentric' paradigms, lesson-planning and implementation, materials, Artists/Writers Workshop, and much, much more. An accompanying DVD provides visual instruction as well as classroom demonstrations. After having used both of Beth Olshansky's models for nearly ten years, I am still taken aback by the alchemy that occurs when students finally find eloquence after creating their hand-painted, textured collage images. *The Power of Pictures* should be required reading for anyone teaching students to write!

—**Emily Pike**, Enrichment teacher,
Bernardsville, NJ