

# Book Review

reviewed by **Claudia E. Cornett**

## High Praise for the Power!

By Beth Olshansky, Jossey-Bass, 2008.

### *The Power of Pictures: Creating Pathways to Literacy through Art*

As a literacy educator, I've long admired Beth Olshansky's work. This gem of a book will now make her "pictures first"

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approach to literacy accessible to all teachers. Beth starts with a fundamental literacy truth: The root of comprehension and composition is visual images. Even young children can decode the meaning of pictures and encode meaning into pictures with ease, without instruction.

Beth proceeds to show teachers, even those with no prior art knowledge, how to use this truth to transform the literacy learning of all students, especially diverse learners. She makes plain how visual art is indeed a critical pathway to literacy by explaining the parallels among art-making, writing, and constructing meaning during comprehension.

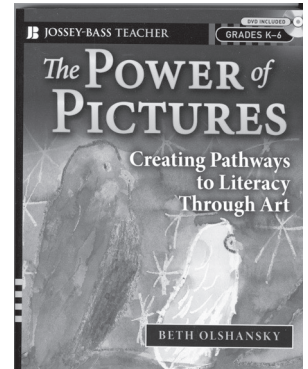
Beth writes with passion about her personal literacy journey that is informed by two decades of work with children; her research is

well respected in both the professional literacy and arts-integration communities. The result of all her work is the Artists/Writers Workshop model. This solid literacy framework is infused with an innovative art-based alternative that taps into the source of all good writing—making pictures inside and

outside your head. The four-step process (demonstrated in the DVD that accompanies the book) has a simple elegance and provides a new vision of how all students can write successfully.

As a teacher, I need and want practical literacy strategies that have been proven to succeed. Beth provides these with specifics about everything from minilessons that include modeling and scaffolding to guidelines for teaching crayon-resist and collage-making as sources for subsequent writing. Both novice and veteran teachers will enjoy her book walks, brainstorming frames, happy accidents, and silver-dollar words. She offers solid recommendations for engaging students in reflection, as well as her assessment checklists.

Beth has made a significant contribution to expanding our view of literacy and what effective literacy instruction should be. She convinces readers that the arts are indeed the fourth *R*. ●



**Claudia E. Cornett** is professor emerita at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, and the author of *Creating Meaning through Literature and the Arts*.