

Keywords in language and literacy

Ronald Carter

London: Routledge, 1995. xii + 172 pp.

This is a nice idea: a collection of 76 entries of terms from the field of language and literacy, organized alphabetically, each item presented discursively, most in some 200–300 words, but some over several pages. Each item is followed by a few references, collated in a single list at the back. The entries include some very general notions (*linguistics, English, grammar, literature, writing*) as well as several at a more specific level (*accent, intonation, metalanguage, register, standard English*). Terms from linguistics sit alongside those from the recent history of ideas (*Kingman, Cox, LINC, real books, knowledge about language, back to basics*). Almost all the entries are established terms, but some items are more headings than keywords (*complaint tradition*), and I found it odd to see included an approach (*critical linguistics*) which is by no means yet established in the mainstream of linguistic thinking.

The summaries of recent trends and reports are very clear and succinct, and the political constraints in which so much debate has been carried on in recent years comes across very clearly. The range of entries, and their widely varying lengths, display the personal interests and experience of the author, and the book should not be read as a systematic or balanced guide to the field; but given the important role Carter has played in the development of educational linguistics in recent years, it is precisely this personal bias which makes it an interesting read.