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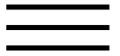
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Kathy G. Short

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Researching Intertextuality Within Collaborative Classroom Learning Environments

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As more and more researchers focus on the process of intertextuality, the issue of where this research occurs needs to be given greater consideration. The majority of research studies on intertextuality have either involved students in research tasks outside the classroom setting or examined the process within hierarchial classroom environments. The lack of authenticity in these research tasks for learners and the restrictions on the intertextual connections that can be advanced within a hierarchial learning environment have limited our understandings about intertextuality. Researching intertextuality within collaborative learning environments will open up a broader range of connections and meaning-making among learners and allow researchers to understand more about student learning and effective learning environments. More importantly, research in these powerful classroom contexts will support researchers in building an educational theory of intertextuality and broader understandings about the nature of intertextuality. One particular research context, literature circles, is examined to identify the characteristics of generative research environments for the study of intertextuality.

A small group of first graders are meeting in a literature circle to discuss the folktale *Hansel and Gretel*. As they share their favorite parts, Pat suddenly bursts into the discussion, "You know, I think that the witch was really the stepmother in disguise." The rest of the group look at him in surprise. Finally the teacher asks, "Why do you think that, Pat? None of the rest of us understand what you are saying." Pat quickly opens the book and points out that the witch and the stepmother never appear at the same time and that after the children kill the witch, they return home to find out that the stepmother has died. "The stepmother could have been disguised as a witch," he points out. Sherry joins in, "We've read other stories like that." "Oh, like the "Snow White" story I read last week," says the teacher excitedly, realizing that Pat has provided a new possible interpretation for the story. The group continues their discussion, examining the book and talking about different interpretations for the events. (Short, 1986, pp. 316–317)

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