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Learning from Scant Beginnings: English Professor Expertise

By John V. KNAPP

Cranbury, New Jersey, U.S.A.: Univ of Delaware Pr, 2008. Hardcover. Book Condition: New. 1st Edition. Although teaching is perhaps the central public activity of most university English professors, one finds surprisingly little research in the specifics of expert professorial practice that are not either the end products of successful teaching, or the conflation of expertise in the subject matter with pedagogical expertise. This case study describes the moves an expert professor makes in a semester-long process, of reaching a literature far removed from most undergraduates' experiences in a day-to-day study of an advanced undergraduate course in the writings of John Milton. Employing an 'asituated learning' model to help explain the incremental growth of students' knowledge and critical skills, Dr. Knapp details how an expert professor teaches complex literary works to undergraduates with no previous exposure to an author's writings. Generalising from this process, the author describes the particulars of literary learning and student development from scant knowledge about an author or historical period to their growing mastery by the semester's end. After mentioning several of the cognitive and emotional attributes required of students reading imaginative literature, the author summarises research in cognitive psychology on the teaching of imaginative literature, explaining why...



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