



# In the Middle: New Understandings About Writing, Reading, and Learning

*Nancie Atwell*

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**In the Middle: New Understandings About Writing, Reading, and Learning** Nancie Atwell  
Recommended by the Ontario Ministry of Education

Grades 6-10

When first published in 1987, this seminal work was widely hailed for its honest examination of how teachers teach, how students learn, and the gap that lies in between. In depicting her own classroom struggles, Nancie Atwell shook our orthodox assumptions about skill-and-drill-based curriculums and became a pioneer of responsive teaching. Now, in the long awaited second edition, Atwell reflects on the next ten years of her experience, rethinks and clarifies old methods, and demonstrates new, more effective approaches.

The second edition still urges educators to "come out from behind their own big desks" to turn classrooms into workshops where students and teachers create curriculums together. But it also advocates a more activist role for teachers. Atwell writes, "I'm no longer willing to withhold suggestions and directions from my kids when I can help them solve a problem, do something they've never done before, produce stunning writing, and ultimately become more independent of me."

More than 70 percent of the material is new, with six brand-new chapters on genres, evaluation, and the teacher as writer. There are also lists of several hundred minilessons, and scripts and examples for teaching them; new expectations and rules for writing and reading workshops; ideas for teaching conventions; new systems for record keeping; lists of essential books for students and teachers; and forms for keeping track of individual spelling, skills, proofreading, homework, writing, and reading.

The second edition of *In the Middle* is written in the same engaging style as its predecessor. It reads like a story—one that readers will be pleased to learn has no end. As Atwell muses, "I know my students and I will continue to learn and be changed. I am resigned—happily—to be always beginning for the rest of my life as a teacher."



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