



## Louise Rosenblatt

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### Introduction

Louise Rosenblatt (b. 1904–d. 2005) was a highly influential thinker in literary and critical theory, reading pedagogy, and education. She was professor of education at New York University from 1948 until 1972, and she continued to teach for many years at other universities. The impact of her writings extends to aesthetics, communication and media studies, and cultural studies. Her transactional theory of reading literature earned a permanent place among methodologies applied to the study of reader comprehension and improving the teaching of reading, from preschool to college-age years. She is most widely known for her “reader response” theory of literature. The process of reading is a dynamic transaction between the reader and the text, in which meaningful ideas arise for readers from their own thoughtful and creative interpretations. Her first book, *Literature as Exploration*, which was published in 1938, has gone through five editions and remains in print in the early 21st century. Her last book, *Making Meaning with Texts: Selected Essays*, was published in 2005 and contained selected essays from each decade of her career. Rosenblatt’s view of literary experience threw down a challenge to a dominant paradigm during the 1940s and 1950s, namely the New Criticism. New Criticism held that authentic meanings of a piece of creative writing—a novel, story, drama, poem, and so on—are already within the text itself, requiring attention to that somewhat concealed yet objective truth. Rosenblatt took the pragmatist approach, starting from the aesthetics of reading. As a member of the Conference on Methods in Philosophy and the Sciences at Columbia University during the 1930s, she studied John Dewey, Charles Peirce, and William James. During this time, she married the pragmatist philosopher Sidney Ratner. Rosenblatt applied her knowledge of pragmatism to the question of understanding creative writing. For pragmatism, all experiences are creative fusions of intersecting processes, some from within and some from without. Any comprehension of a text blends the reader’s particular approach for appreciating it together with the capacity of the text to provoke a variety of stimulating ideas. The emotional and the factual are rarely found in pure forms; only a gradual range from the affective to the cognitive can characterize lived experience. Understanding the process of reading in its fundamental experiential situation has been a revolutionary philosophical position, impacting both childhood education and literary theory. Rosenblatt’s work continues to inspire fresh academic research and curricular innovations.

### Major Writings

Rosenblatt’s central text is *Literature as Exploration* (1938), which went through five editions and remains in print. Her other widely studied work is *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (1978). Many of her impactful articles were gathered in *Making Meaning with Texts: Selected Essays* (2005). The Louise Rosenblatt Papers (1904–2005) are held at the Southern Illinois University Special Collections in Carbondale, Illinois.

**Rosenblatt, Louise. *Literature as Exploration*. New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1938.**

Rosenblatt’s primary work about her reader response theory, her methods of reading pedagogy, and her views on literary theory in general. The fifth edition (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1995) includes her “Retrospect and Prospect” chapter.

**Rosenblatt, Louise. “Toward a Cultural Approach to Literature.” *College English* 7.8 (1946): 459–466.**

Her comparative approach to world literature offers a culturally sensitive method that elevates our conscientiousness toward other ways of life. That sensitivity promotes the growth of toleration and thoughtfulness, and those capacities in turn promote democratic values.

**Rosenblatt, Louise. “The Acid Test for Literature Teaching.” *English Journal* 45.2 (1956): 66–74.**

Discussing literature with students allows them to personally relate to their reading. Imposing standardized interpretations only obstructs an authentic and meaningful experience of a text by each person.

**Rosenblatt, Louise. “Literature: The Reader’s Role.” *English Journal* 49.5 (May 1960): 304–310, 315–316.**

Teachers must balance the willing engagement of student readers with the need to read important works of literature as well as popular contemporary texts. Reading for lifelong development is the point of education. How a piece of literature can be appreciated by a reader will change over one’s lifetime, which is to be expected.

**Rosenblatt, Louise. “Toward a Transactional Theory of Reading.” *Journal of Reading Behavior* 1.1 (1969): 31–51.**

Rosenblatt elaborates and defends the transactional view of meaningfully aesthetic experiences. This view illuminates how her reader response theory evaluates various ways to read literature.

**Rosenblatt, Louise. *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.**

Rosenblatt applies her reader response theory to the experience of poetry, as an illustration of the transactional approach to literary works of art. The poem as read, like a piece of music as played, is an event incorporating the performer's own characteristics and abilities. The quest for "the poem itself" is a chase after a false objectivity, and the evaluation and criticism of a poem must avoid reducing the role of the reader.

**Rosenblatt, Louise. "The Literary Transaction: Evocation and Response." *Theory into Practice* 21.4 (1982): 268–277.**

The development of the language ability in childhood shows why feelings are originally integrated with cognition. In maturity, efferent and aesthetic readings can diverge because the efferent gets oriented toward the social context. Teachers of literature should promote the primacy of aesthetic readings.

**Rosenblatt, Louise. "Language, Literature, and Values." In *Language, Schooling, and Society*. Edited by S. N. Tchudi, 64–80. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1985a.**

The perspective on literary studies taken by Rosenblatt through the transactional theory of experience shows how personal and prosocial values are promoted in the process.

**Rosenblatt, Louise. "Transaction versus Interaction: A Terminological Rescue Operation." *Research in the Teaching of English* 19.1 (1985b): 96–107.**

The transactional view of experience cannot recognize any criteria for deciding how a text is objectively literary, independent from aesthetic features of a reader's response. Depicting reading as a mere interaction between separate matters is insufficient. Only each reader's engagement could determine whether a text is literature.

**Rosenblatt, Louise. *Making Meaning with Texts: Selected Essays*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.**

A new preface ("To My Readers") and "Theory and Practice: An Interview with Louise Rosenblatt" start this collection. Prominent chapters are: "The Transactional Theory of Reading and Writing," "Viewpoints: Transaction versus Interaction: A Terminological Rescue Operation," "Toward a Cultural Approach to Literature," "The Acid Test for Literature Teaching," "The Literary Transaction: Evocation and Response," "Literature—SOS!," and "What Facts Does This Poem Teach You?"

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## General Overviews

Opportunities to directly hear from Rosenblatt about her own observations on her career and academic goals are provided by Karolides 1999, Wilson 1981, Erixon and Malmgren 2005, and Taylor 2017. For retrospective looks at Rosenblatt's intellectual development and major influences, consult Connell 2008 and Innis 1998. Mayher 2008 focuses on the New York University context for the impact of Rosenblatt's scholarship in that university's English department. Harkin 2005 describes the heights of the clash between Rosenblatt's reader response and rival literary theories. The collection of essays in Clifford 1991 remains the best single-volume entryway into the reception and influence of Rosenblatt's thought.

**Clifford, John, ed. *The Experience of Reading: Louise Rosenblatt and Reader-Response Theory*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1991.**

Contains fourteen chapters, notably these: "Louise Rosenblatt and Theories of Reader Response" by Carolyn Allen; "Reading Literature in a Democracy: The Challenge of Louise Rosenblatt" by Gordon Pradl; "Democratic Practice, Pragmatic Vistas: Louise Rosenblatt and the Reader's Response" by Ann E. Berthoff; "The Lost Reader of Democracy" by John Willinsky; "Rosenblatt and Feminism" by Elizabeth Flynn; and "The Aesthetic Mind of Louise Rosenblatt" by Alan Purves.

**Connell, Jeanne M. "The Emergence of Pragmatic Philosophy's Influence on Literary Theory: Making Meaning with Texts from a Transactional Perspective." *Educational Theory* 58.1 (2008): 103–122.**

Connell surveys and analyzes the reception of Rosenblatt's pragmatist approach to literary theory across her career. The value of this approach for educational philosophy remains as important as ever.

**Erixon, Per-Olof, and Gun Malmgren. "Literature as Exploration: Interview with Louise M. Rosenblatt (1904–2005), Princeton, N.J., April 25, 2001." *Tidskrift för Lärarutbildning och Forskning* 12.4 (2005): 51–75.**

The interviewers elicit answers from Rosenblatt about the events of her academic career and the stages of her growing influence on reading education.

**Harkin, Patricia. "The Reception of Reader-Response Theory." *College Composition and Communication* 56.3 (2005): 410–425.**

The reader response theory was well received during the 1960s and 1970s due to the conjunction of rival elitist theories and populist political agendas. Thinkers such as Rosenblatt who championed readers are now needed again, as methodologies for introductory reading and writing must be reconsidered and recrafted.

**Innis, Robert E. "Pragmatism and the Fate of Reading." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 34.4 (1998): 869–884.**

Innis surveys several pragmatist thinkers, from Peirce and Dewey to Rosenblatt, whose theories of signs, language, and experience have enriched the study of reading and the philosophy of literature.

**Karolides, Nicholas. "Theory and Practice: An Interview with Louise M. Rosenblatt" *Language Arts* 77.2 (1999): 158–170.**

This interview covers Rosenblatt's stances on teaching methods, the process of reading, and the design of literature curricula.

**Mayher, John S. "The Legacy of English Education at NYU." *English Education* 40.4 (2008): 277–292.**

This collection of reminiscences includes a section by Gordon Pradl titled "Literature for Democracy: The Legacy of Louise Rosenblatt," which outlines the impact of her work on the English Department's program.

**Taylor, Denny. "Louise Rosenblatt." In *Great Women Scholars: Yetta Goodman, Maxine Greene, Louise Rosenblatt, Margaret Meek Spencer*. Edited by Denny Taylor, 33–41. New York: Garn Press, 2017.**

Excerpts from a 2001 talk given by Rosenblatt about her career in education and her philosophical development.

**Wilson, Lionel. "The Reader's Contribution in the Literary Experience: Interview with Louise Rosenblatt." *English Quarterly* 14.1 (1981): 3–12.**

This interview discusses Dr. Rosenblatt's books on literature and reading and explores the transactional theory of reading, in which the text and the reader are equally important.

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## Retrospectives and Memorials

The collection of essays in Farrell and Squire 1990 provides many educational perspectives on the impact of Rosenblatt's theories upon reading pedagogy, instructional methodologies, and research techniques. The numerous brief tributes to Rosenblatt assembled in Beers 2005 are similarly broad in scope. Articles in Smith 2008 are focused on the teaching of literature. The retrospectives provided by Douglas 1979, Mailloux 2005, Roen and Karolides 2005, and Connell 2005 are able to help complete an overall picture of the significance of Rosenblatt's career. Mills, et al. 2004 takes a political perspective on Rosenblatt's scholarship. In their own category are the authors of Elliot 2008, for his manner of molding Rosenblatt into a parable for democracy's own story, and Flynn 2007, who perceives an ethical agenda behind Rosenblatt's literary theory.

**Beers, Kylene, ed. *Special Issue: Remembering Louise Rosenblatt. Voices from the Middle* 12.3 (2005).**

Twenty-six tributes, recollections, and overviews of Rosenblatt and her work, along with a selected bibliography.

**Connell, Jeanne M. "Continue to Explore: In Memory of Louise Rosenblatt (1904–2005)." *Education and Culture* 21.2 (2005): 63–79.**

A brief but detailed intellectual biography, with special attention to the development of her reader response theory and the impact of her pedagogical views on education.

**Douglas, Wallace. "Rosenblatt's Theory of the Literary Transaction." *CEA Critic* 41.4 (1979): 34–38.**

Douglas favorably reviews Rosenblatt's book *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*.

**Elliot, Norbert. "A Midrash for Louise Rosenblatt." *Rhetoric Review* 27.3 (2008): 281–304.**

An informed citizenry was Rosenblatt's overarching concern, according to Elliot's narrative of her personal story and of the times during which she lived. She believed that transformative literature has the essential power to transform people's lives.

**Farrell, Edmund J., and James R. Squire, eds. *Transactions with Literature: A Fifty-Year Perspective: For Louise M. Rosenblatt*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1990.**

Twelve chapters, including: "Fifty Years of Exploring Children's Books" by Rudine Sims Bishop; "Fifty Years of Literature for Young Adults" by Kenneth Donelson; "'Literature as Exploration' and the Classroom" by Robert Probst; "New Directions in Research on Response to Literature" by Richard Beach; "Can Literature Be Rescued from Reading?" by Alan C. Purves; "Retrospect" by Louise Rosenblatt; and "Research on Response to Literature" by Richard Beach and Susan Hynds.

**Flynn, Elizabeth A.** "Louise Rosenblatt and the Ethical Turn in Literary Theory." *College English* 70.1 (2007): 52–69.

Rosenblatt's theory of literature was a forerunner to the later wave of ethical criticism in the teaching and evaluation of literature.

**Mailloux, Steven.** "In Memoriam: Louise M. Rosenblatt, 1904–2005." *PMLA* 120.3 (2005): 886–887.

A short tribute to Rosenblatt's philosophy of education, from a scholar also sympathetic to pragmatism.

**Mills, Heidi, Diane Stephens, Timothy O'Keefe, and Julie Waugh.** "Theory in Practice: The Legacy of Louise Rosenblatt." *Language Arts* 82.1 (2004): 47–55.

Reading literature, and discussing literature among people, can help foster the democratic life in a society.

**Roen, Duane, and Nicholas Karolidis.** "Louise Rosenblatt: A Life in Literacy." *ALAN Review* 32.3 (Summer 2005): 59–61.

A brief tribute to the impact of the transactional theory of literature upon the teaching of reading literary works.

**Smith, Karen, ed.** *Special Issue: Louise Rosenblatt 1904–2005. English Quarterly Canada* 38.2–3 (2008): 2–56.

Contains five articles: Karen Smith, "Louise Rosenblatt: An Enduring Legacy in the Teaching of Literature"; Cynthia Moranwski and Janelle Gilbert, "Bringing Louise Rosenblatt into the Content Areas: Transacting in Interactive Bibliotherapy"; Janet McIntosh, "Reader Response Journals in Intermediate Language Arts"; Jennifer Nicol, "Questioning the Canon: Issues Surrounding the Selection of Literature for the High School English Curriculum"; and Carl Leggo, "The Wildness of Language: Musing on Poetry and Pedagogy."

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## Literature as Exploration

Rosenblatt's first book, *Literature as Exploration*, launched her "reader response" approach to understanding how literature elicits diverse appreciative reactions. Dressman and Webster 2001 notes and compares significant revisions made for each of this book's five editions, while Church 1997 surveys the continuing relevance of this book for teaching literature. According to Rosenblatt, as a transactional process operating primarily at an aesthetic level between the reader and a text, reading always involves a singular reader and a single text, paired at a time. That uniquely dynamic relationship is a sort of creative exploration of possible meanings and understandings, and these articles should be consulted on this point: Probst 1988, Faust 2000, and Chaplin 1982. The primary function of a piece of creative writing is to provoke an imaginative participation with that writing's literary qualities. Although a text can be read for its "efferent" meaning of just factual information, the primary mode of participation is mainly aesthetic. What the text means can only consist of the meanings generated, in a shared process involving the text's author, reader responses, and conversations among readers about those responses. No one factor dictates that distributed and collaborative process, nor should one of them dominate any outcomes. The multiplicity of textual meanings therefore undergoes shifts and changes across audiences and over time, permitting a "living" text that retains some meaningful impact. Proper interpretation must not overemphasize any factor, such as academic tradition, respected critics, or admiring readers, as Davis 1992, Faust 2001, and Connell 2001 emphasize. Anyone guiding readers to literature should hear Rosenblatt's advice that "books do not simply happen to people. People also happen to books" (Rosenblatt 1956, cited under Major Writings, p. 66). In this spirit, two books make their recommendations for literature curricula and teaching strategies, Karolidis 1999 and Appleyard 1990.

**Appleyard, J. A.** *Becoming a Reader: The Experience of Fiction from Childhood to Adulthood*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Appleyard defends a view of lifespan development from childhood, in which each person goes through the same stages of literacy, appreciation of literature, and self-formation through engagements with literature. This theory about one's psychological development through literature is indebted to Rosenblatt's transactional approach.

**Chaplin, Miriam T.** "Rosenblatt Revisited: The Transaction between Reader and Text." *Journal of Reading* 26.2 (1982): 150–154.

This article offers suggestions for college instructors of literature, based on Rosenblatt's transactional view of the reader response paradigm.

**Church, Gladdys Westbrook.** "The Significance of Louise Rosenblatt on the Field of Teaching Literature." *Inquiry* 1.1 (1997): 71–77.

Church defends Rosenblatt's reader response theory, and asserts its utility for ongoing research in reading and its relevance for today's college classrooms.

**Connell, Jeanne M.** "Restoring Aesthetic Experiences in the School Curriculum: The Legacy of Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory from *Literature as Exploration*." *Educational Foundations* 15.1 (2001): 39–56.

Rosenblatt's transactional theory not only is germane to the teaching of literature and creative writing, but it also lends itself to shaping much of the school curriculum, which needs to foster the development of democratic citizens.

**Davis, Judith Rae.** "Reconsidering Readers: Louise Rosenblatt and Reader-Response Pedagogy." *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education* 8.2 (1992): 71–81.

The instruction of developmental reading is enriched by Rosenblatt's pedagogical theories for literature.

**Dressman, Mark, and Joan Webster.** "Retracing Rosenblatt: A Textual Archaeology." *Research in the Teaching of English* 36.1 (2001): 110–145.

This article compares the five editions of Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration* and notes the significant changes made to each edition.

**Faust, Mark.** "Reconstructing Familiar Metaphors: John Dewey and Louise Rosenblatt on Literary Art as Experience." *Research in the Teaching of English* 35.1 (2000): 9–34.

The experience of literature is not just a matter of an interaction between a reader and a text, as if they could be neatly separated. Formalist approaches to literature ensue, but Dewey and Rosenblatt resisted all formalism with their transactional view of experience.

**Faust, Mark.** "Literary Art as Experience: A Transactional Perspective on the Interface between Scholarship and Pedagogy." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 35.3 (2001): 37–50.

There remains a divide between the study of literature and the pedagogy of reading, despite Rosenblatt's transactional viewpoint, due to unexamined assumptions about reading experiences. Faust's empirical work with eighth-grade students contributes to this critical rereading of Rosenblatt.

**Karolides, Nicholas J., ed.** *Reader Response in Secondary and College Classrooms*. 2d ed. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1999.

Chapters present reader-centered models for teaching strategies, such as imaginative writing, writing letters, role playing, self-expressive poetry, and journal writing, to promote the application of the transactional model of learning through literature.

**Probst, Robert E.** "Transactional Theory in the Teaching of Literature." *Journal of Reading* 31.4 (1988): 378–381.

Conversations, not debates, should be the goal of discussions about responses to literature. Students should learn to articulate their personal responses to reading, compare them sympathetically with the responses of others, and reflect on commonalities and contrasts to form evaluative judgments.

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## Teaching Literature for Children

Examinations of Rosenblatt's specific view of the primacy of the aesthetic response during reading, and its centrality for the literacy development of young readers, are provided by Connell 2000, Pantaleo 2013, and Galda 2013. Other articles address Rosenblatt's overall theoretical position, her transactional approach to the nature of experiences. Prest 1988 offers thoughts on reading instruction that privileges neither the text nor the reader. The author of Onofrey 2006 describes what she has observed in classrooms of adolescents where the humor of literature is the focus, while the author of Pantaleo 2013 recounts her research with young students responding to an age-appropriate graphic novel. For a valuable example of a book supplying guidance about literature for young children, designed from the standpoint of Rosenblatt's transactional theory, see Yellin 2017. Concerns about the vulnerabilities of children are the starting point for three more articles. Mellinee 2004 critiques the unhelpful regimes of remedial reading instruction. Similarly, Mceneaney, et al. 2006 argues that the standard "disability" categorization for reading difficulties should be replaced with a positive capabilities approach. As for worries about the tender sensitivities of students, Wolfsdorf 2018 warns against the trend of "trigger warnings" for its tendency to encourage cowardice and close-mindedness.

**Connell, Jeanne M.** "Aesthetic Experiences in the School Curriculum: Assessing the Value of Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 34.1 (2000): 27–35.

An exposition of the main themes of Rosenblatt's book *Literature as Exploration*, with a focus on her understanding of aesthetic experience.

**Galda, Lee.** "Learning from Children Reading Books: Transactional Theory and the Teaching of Literature." *Journal of Children's Literature* 39.2 (Fall 2013): 5–13.

A defense of the transactional theory with ample illustrations from the author's many decades of teaching.

**Mceneaney, John E., Mary K. Lose, and Robert M. Schwartz.** "A Transactional Perspective on Reading Difficulties and Response to Intervention." *Reading Research Quarterly* 41.1 (2006): 117–128.

Rather than taking a "disability" perspective on reading difficulties, teachers should rely on a transactional approach to reading ability, which starts from the child's capabilities in order to relate them to the reading experience.

**Mellinee, Lesley.** "Refugees from Reading: Students' Perceptions of 'Remedial' Literacy Pedagogy." *Reading Research and Instruction* 44.1 (2004): 62–85.

College-level remedial reading is thwarted by negative self-conceptions that students have retained. They should be replaced by positive ideas about one's ownership of reading experiences.

**Onofrey, Karen A.** "'It Is More Than Just Laughing': Middle School Students Protect Characters during Talk." *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* 20.3 (2006): 207–217.

A study of some sixth-grade students shows how they transactionally deal with humor in adolescent literature.

**Pantaleo, Sylvia.** "Developing Narrative Competence through Reading and Writing Metafictive Texts." *Literacy Research and Instruction* 49.3 (2010): 264–281.

Research on third and fourth graders about their written responses to a selection of picture books.

**Pantaleo, Sylvia.** "Revisiting Rosenblatt's Aesthetic Response through *The Arrival*." *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 36.3 (2013): 125–134.

A study of nine year olds and their written responses to the textless graphic novel *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (2006).

**Prest, Peter.** "Theory into Practice: Clarifying Our Intentions: Some Thoughts on the Application of Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reading in the Classroom." *English Quarterly* 21.2 (1988): 127–133.

Prest shows a methodical way past the false dilemma of either demanding a literal grasp of texts or eliciting personal responses from readers.

**Wolfsdorf, Adam.** "When It Comes to High School English, Let's Put Away the Triggers." *English Journal, High School Edition* 108.1 (2018): 39–44.

At the high school level, reading by adolescents is an opportunity to explore the physiological, mental, and social challenges that they are confronting through literature that deals with life's changes and conflicts. Trigger warnings encourage cowardice instead of needed courage for young adults.

**Yellin, David.** *Sharing the Journey: Literature for Young Children*. London: Routledge, 2017.

Yellin uses Rosenblatt's transactional theory to guide this book's ample selection of recommended children's literature for readers from three through eight years of age.

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## Literary Criticism

It can be a simple matter to poorly classify Rosenblatt with "child-centered" educational theories that only think about the private reception of meaningful experiences, individual by individual. Although she could not agree with literary theories that place the entirety of literary meaning on the side of the text's intrinsic information or the author's intentions, Rosenblatt never meant to treat reader responses in isolation from those of others, or from society's established understandings of literature. Perhaps a sharp contrast with New Criticism is overblown, as Rejan 2017 suggests. A broader overview of the many types of literary theories during the 20th century can better show genuine commonalities and contrasts; see Tompkins 1980 and Tyson 2014. Rosenblatt's theory is ultimately just as much socially oriented as it is individually focused. Although the possibility, and the value, of divergent interpretations among readers cannot be ruled out, the active reader should take into account what can be usefully said about a text's impact on many readers. Conversations are more important than conventions, to be sure, but well-equipped readers can thoughtfully converse with conventional interpretations of literature as well as they can creatively make their original reactions. Hallin 1995 and Soter, et al. 2010 address the social features required for the success of Rosenblatt's transactional theory.

**Hallin, Annika.** "A Rhetoric for Audiences: Louise Rosenblatt on Reading and Action." In *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. Edited by Andrea A. Lunsford, 285–303. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995.

Rosenblatt diverted literary theory away from focusing solely on texts and their authors as the sources of meaning. The experience of reading cannot be isolated from the everyday world and ordinary discourse. For rhetoric, this elevates relationships and discourse to high importance for promoting linguistic competence.

**Rejan, Andrew.** "Reconciling Rosenblatt and the New Critics: The Quest for an 'Experienced Understanding' of Literature." *English Education* 50.1 (2017): 10–41.

A comparison of the intellectual roots of Rosenblatt's reader response theory and the New Criticism movement shows that there were many parallels to their approaches for appreciating literature. For example, they were both influenced by I. A. Richards and John Dewey. The central place of reading in the learning of literature should no longer be mischaracterized through crude depictions of Reader Response and New Criticism.

**Soter, Anna O., Ian A. G. Wilkinson, Sean P. Connors, P. Karen Murphy, and Vincent Fu-Yuan Shen. "Deconstructing 'Aesthetic Response' in Small-Group Discussions about Literature: A Possible Solution to the 'Aesthetic Response' Dilemma." *English Education* 42.2 (2010): 204–225.**

In the authors' research, Jakobson's expressive theory language is a more nuanced account of reading experiences than Rosenblatt's reader response theory or any formalist approach. They propose the label of "expressive response" to better cover the variety of readership reactions, to go beyond Rosenblatt's "aesthetic response" view.

**Tompkins, Jane, ed. *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-structuralism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.**

This anthology collects essays from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Many theories are represented in this selection, such as phenomenology, psychoanalysis, New Criticism, structuralism, and deconstruction. What they share in common is their resistance to the view that only the literary text itself possesses all the meaning to be transmitted to readers.

**Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. 2d ed. London: Routledge, 2014.**

Rosenblatt's reader response theory, as a rejection of New Criticism, is presented, alongside a wide range of theoretical approaches to literary analysis.

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## Communications and Media

Multidisciplinary impacts made by Rosenblatt's transactional theory extend across communication studies and media studies to archival and museum studies. On the study of responses to film and screenplays, see Lee 2016 and Malich and Kehus 2012. On research into video gaming, see Sanders 2016. The experience of working with documentary and artifactual matters is discussed in Latham 2014. Even legal theory can benefit from a transactional view of experiencing artworks, as Said 2017 explains.

**Latham, Kiersten F. "Experiencing Documents." *Journal of Documentation* 70.4 (2014): 544–561.**

From the author's perspective on the fields of information behavior and museum studies, Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading illuminates the experience of researching and exploring documents and artifacts.

**Lee, Klaudia H. Y. "Audience Response and from Film Adaptation to Reading Literature." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 18.2 (2016): 1–6.**

Hong Kong university students were queried about their responses to screen adaptations, in order to study how they are motivated to choose and engage with this media format.

**Malich, John, and Marcella J. Kehus. "A Reading Theorist's World View through the Lens of Terrence Malick: The 'Poem' Created from Transacting *The Tree of Life* Trailer." *Journal of Visual Literacy* 31.1 (2012): 1–22.**

Rosenblatt's transactional theory of a reading event is applied in film theory, where there is evidence of critical reading in peoples' commentary upon *The Tree of Life* trailer.

**Philpott, Nicola. "'Who am I supposed to be?' How Media Affect the Identity Formation of Young Adults." *English Quarterly* 32.1–2 (2000): 66–73.**

Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading is helpful for tracking identity formation during youth as they consume media today.

**Said, Zahr K. "A Transactional Theory of the Reader in Copyright Law." *Iowa Law Review* 102.2 (2017): 605–650.**

Copyright law has a "reading problem" where it is necessary to judge whether there has been an infringement of copyright regarding artistic works. The ordinary observer standard that is typically applied in court cases distorts expectations about how people experience artworks, and the transactional approach permits a more nuanced and dynamic model.

**Sanders, April. "Emotional Response to Gaming Producing Rosenblatt's Transaction." In *Emotions, Technology, and Digital Games*. Edited by Sharon Y. Tettegah and Wenhao David Huang, 115–136. London: Academic Press, 2016.**

Three kinds of video games are studied: simulation (*Sims FreePlay*), first-person shooter (*Halo 1*), and role playing (*World of Warcraft*). As Rosenblatt's transactional view would predict, personal emotion is essential for interpreting the gaming experience, and other parallels were also observed.

**Thomas, Ebony Elizabeth, and Amy Stornaiuolo. "Restorying the Self: Bending toward Textual Justice." *Harvard Educational Review* 86.3 (2016): 313–338.**

In a digital age, young people are contributing their perspectives to bend online narratives to fill in gaps and silences characterizing mainstream media. Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading can account for these processes of self-inscription.

## Society and Politics

Consistent with the pragmatism that launched her intellectual quest, the vision of a pluralistic and multiculturally fluent society has guided Rosenblatt's hope for a literary citizenry since the early years of her career. The capacity of her transactional theory of experience to help fulfill that vision deserves scrutiny and further work. Cai 2008, for example, questions how Rosenblatt's aesthetic response view could contribute sufficiently to authentic multiculturalism. Dressman 2004 proposes revisions to Rosenblatt's aesthetics to ensure their maximal social relevance. Van Vaerenwyck 2017 situates the aesthetic response within a global context to promote cross-cultural understandings. Commentators who pursue Rosenblatt's significance for politics also try mold her transactional theory into a suitable theoretical support for democracy. Silverman 2013 finds prototypes for democratic virtues in shared music appreciation. Pradl 1996 and Raines 2005 expound upon Rosenblatt's literature pedagogy as exemplary for democratic participation. Vytņiorgu 2018 detects a personalist concern in Rosenblatt's aesthetics for individuals in social relations, which serves as a better ground for democracy.

**Cai, Mingshui. "Transactional Theory and the Study of Multicultural Literature." *Language Arts* 85.3 (2008): 212–220.**

The author defends Rosenblatt's overall transactional theory, but not her aesthetic response view. The experiential range from the aesthetic to the efferent is insufficient for appreciating how the understanding of multicultural literature is dependent on particular social, cultural, and political factors already salient for a reader.

**Dressman, Mark. "Dewey and Bakhtin in Dialogue: From Rosenblatt to a Pedagogy of Literature as Social Aesthetic Practice." In *Bakhtinian Perspectives on Language, Literacy and Learning*. Edited by Arnetha F. Ball and Sarah Warshauer Freedman, 34–52. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.**

The author calls into question the common map to chart ranges of literary experience: one axis for the degree of teacher responsibility for guiding reader reactions, from low to high; the other axis for the range of objectivity to be taken toward experienced meanings of texts (from low to high).

**Pradl, Gordon M. "Reading and Democracy: The Enduring Influence of Louise Rosenblatt." *New Advocate* 9.1 (1996): 9–22.**

Discusses fostering democratic principles in the literature classroom, moving from reader response to democratic community, listening and democracy, listening together as teachers, and democratic reading and the integration of thought and feeling—all stemming from the work of Louise Rosenblatt and applied to the classroom and teacher/student relationships.

**Raines, Angela S. "Louise Rosenblatt: An Advocate for Nurturing Democratic Participation." *Talking Points (National Council of Teachers of English)* 17.1 (2005): 28–31.**

The critical thinkers of tomorrow will not emerge unless the teaching of literature guides readers toward the capacity to take responsibility for their responses to others.

**Silverman, Marissa. "A Critical Ethnography of Democratic Music Listening." *British Journal of Music Education* 30.1 (2013): 7–25.**

In the author's urban-setting music classroom, students gain the most out their musical enjoyment when everyone has an equal opportunity to express and share their responses to, and evaluations of, their preferred music.

**Van Vaerenwyck, Leah M. "Aesthetic Readings of Diverse Global Literary Narratives for Social Justice." *English Journal, High School Edition* 107.1 (2017): 61–65.**

This article forwards an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that knits together knowledge from literacy, education, and neuroscience to more fully understand the learning opportunities that global literary narratives make available to learners.

**Vytņiorgu, Richard. "An Ethical Ideal? Louise Rosenblatt and Democracy: A Personalist Reconsideration." *Humanities* 7.2 (2018): 29.**

The philosophy of personalism prioritizes the value of human beings, but building social relations in harmony requires more than the liberal democratic ideals that Rosenblatt espouses. However, there are strongly personalist values behind her appeal to the imagination for personal aesthetic responses.

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