

Book Review

Jackie Holderness

500 Activities for the Primary Classroom: Carol Read (2007, Macmillan)

This book will be warmly welcomed by EFL writers and teachers. Carol Read combines many years' experience with sound theoretical understanding and that rare ability to inform, support and inspire teachers through her writing. Within each chapter, she brings her expertise and experience as a teacher trainer to the main areas in primary EFL. Recognising that teachers are busy people, she provides concise summaries of the most important issues, without falling into the dangers of over-simplification or being patronising. Detailed references at the end of chapters enable teachers to study each area of EYL more deeply. The Index has several subsections and has separate lists which teachers will find very useful: Language structures; Topics; Learning skills.

Overall, Carol Read summarises recent educational theory in an accessible and practical way. The introductory chapter provides a comprehensive overview of Primary EFL. Embedded in the section, "Working with children", I particularly liked the following two themes: *Creating optimal conditions for children's learning* and *Managing children positively*. These goals lie at the heart of successful YL pedagogy. "The C wheel" is introduced with at least 8 factors for optimal learning, all beginning with the letter C. e.g. Creativity....Connections....Coherence...etc The eight C's are reinforced by the 7 R's, initiatives that teachers may establish in order to manage their class(es) positively from the start. These R's include Relationships, Routines, Rewards...

The 10 activity-based chapters begin with a short methodological introduction which looks at specific areas in greater detail. The layout is clear and there is a useful section at the end of each chapter, called Reflection Time, where readers are encouraged to improve their practice by asking reflective questions. These questions are designed to enhance the quality of the children's learning. It is Carol Read's experience as a teacher trainer which elevates this book above the many "Ideas

Banks" that exist in Primary Education. While outlining 500 activities which children will enjoy, Read makes clear the learning Aims and language objectives and offers practical comments and suggestions to ensure activities will work in class.

There are many chapters and activities which will be familiar to EYL teachers but there are also some innovative ones, which means that this book will appeal to teachers of varying levels of experience. There are questionnaires, chants, charts, play scripts, visuals and games which teachers can copy or adapt, such as The Question Board Game.

One chapter is devoted to Content-based learning, which is based upon and related to Topic-based learning or CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). This chapter offers a useful "Investigative learning cycle" to encourage pupils to become more reflective as learners. There are several content-based ideas in this chapter, which could be adapted to suit other curriculum subjects.

There is a chapter on ICT and multimedia but, for obvious reasons, perhaps, there are only a few websites listed in the Further Reading. However, there are some interesting research-based activities and some imaginative ways to use photos and DVDs. In the final chapter, on 'Learning to Learn', there are several activities designed to enhance pupils' self-esteem, a key factor in learning success. The well-established Look, Say Cover, Write, Check approach is recommended for learning spelling, with an example of a "script" which teachers could use to model how to "think aloud" when learning to spell a new word. By encouraging pupils to become aware of their own leaning styles and strategies, (e.g. p.314) teachers can develop metacognitive strategies which will transfer to all areas of the curriculum. Other metacognitive activities include memory sticks, goal setting, clines for vocabulary and a learning diary.

A few areas or issues, e.g. Assessment and Parental involvement, so important in the primary phase, might have been addressed more fully, but Homework and Self Assessment are included and I am sure that there will be many future editions, to ensure that the book develops future issues.

The simplicity of this book's layout and design, the accessibility of its written style are likely to make this a standard and valued EYL textbook. Its many practical activity ideas are underpinned by Read's

sound understanding of how children learn and how important their teachers are, so it will appeal to teachers of all levels of experience. It is evident that Read appreciates the importance of teacher development in the enhancement of learning. It is significant that she starts the book with this quote from Rudyard Kipling, which is one I also hold dear:

*“No printed word, nor spoken plea,
Can teach young minds what they should be.
Not all the books on all the shelves,
but what the teachers are themselves...”*

Jackie Holderness is a former senior Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University. She is also an EYL materials writer.

Carol Read is a former editor of CATS. She has also written books in the ‘Bugs’ course book series for Macmillan.



Web Watcher!

Jennifer Uhler Recommends:

Filamentality: This is an online fill in the blank webhunt and samplers www.kn.att.com/wired/fil

Hot Potatoes: An easy to use game and wordhunt maker: www.hotpot.uvic.ca

Audacity: Voice recording software; www.audacity.sourceforge.net

Picasso: A web album www.picasso.google.com

Odeo: An online player and recorder: www.studio.odeo.com

PbWiki: multi-source editing website: www.pbwiki.com

Jennifer Uhler is an English Language Fellow at the University of Tartu, Estonia. She recommended these web sites during her presentation at the YLSIG PCE in Aberdeen this year.



DELTA
YOUNG LEARNERS ENGLISH

Super Starters

An activity-based course for young learners
by Wendy Superfine and Judy West



Based on
the revised
STARTERS
syllabus for
2007



- **Super Starters** prepares pupils for the new, revised 2007 Cambridge Young Learners Starters Test – and makes the learning experience fun!
- **Super Starters** combines a clear and comprehensive syllabus with a stimulating activity-based methodology, encouraging pupils to ‘learn by doing’. It is an excellent course for any young learner in the 7-9 age range.
- For more information and sample material please contact: superstarters@deltapublishing.co.uk



Coming soon... **Mighty Movers** and **Fantastic Flyers**



www.deltapublishing.co.uk