

READ

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In This Issue:

Paul Nation, John Rogan, Darcy Harris, Nick Bullard, Fairlie Atkinson, Rob Hill, Karen Ryan, Susan O'Neil, Adrian Hayes, Katrina Kinsella, Jonathon Marinus, Andrew Littlejohn, Alye Caspary, Diane Boothe, Isobel Aboulhoul, Alan Pulverness, Mohammed Saftawi, Fajer Abbas, Rachel Lange, Neil McBeath, Tom Le Seelleur, Helena Frith Powell, Mohamed Wagjalla.



بناء النجاح Building Success

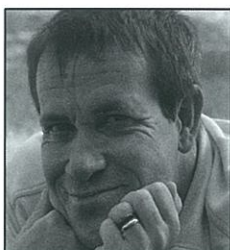
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تعليم اديسون ليرنينج

لدى تعليم - إديسون ليرنينج سجل تتبع بارز في التحول والتحصيل التعليمي. إنه مشروع جديد مبتكر مبني على أسس بحثية قد تأسس في الإمارات العربية المتحدة باشتراك منطمتين دوليتين ناجحتين بشكل كبير و يعملون حالياً ضمن مشروع الشراكة بين القطاعين الخاص و العام مع مجلس ابو ظبي للتعليم.





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Welcome to **READ**. Enjoy issue two with our need to create a reading culture in the UAE and Middle East through the **Power of One** Campaign. POWER of ONE: One in every country, city, town, village, college, school, nursery, library, business, publisher, home Everyone! If one person from one place begins to promote reading through projects, ideas and initiatives then they will influence another one and so one becomes two. Slowly a habit forms, a reading culture grows and parents, students and teachers, librarians, educators and leaders bring about a change in society that can reap everlasting change. Literacy improves, homes build libraries, knowledge increases, readers become leaders, parents read to their children, children read to their parents and eventually children turn into young adults and go directly into universities and good jobs. If you read you succeed. Reading opens doors and minds whatever your language. Reading a newspaper, a book, a magazine, a journal. One sound, word, sentence, paragraph, one story, one book so the adventure and exploration is ignited. If you are a reading leader where you work—seek out new worlds, new civilizations and boldly go where students have never been before. Join forces, start a reading club, put up posters, hold a competition, try new ideas like DEAR, Reading Miles, Get Caught Reading. Inspire. Promote. Start.

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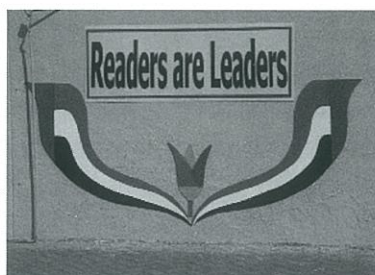
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Issue Three: If you would like to write an article for our next issue please contact:
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Beginning to Read

In this article I want to describe how parents can help their children get ready for reading. The things I am talking about here are largely what parents of native speakers of English could do so that their child is ready to learn to read when they go to school. However, most of the activities described here would work very well with any language or for young learners of English as a second language.

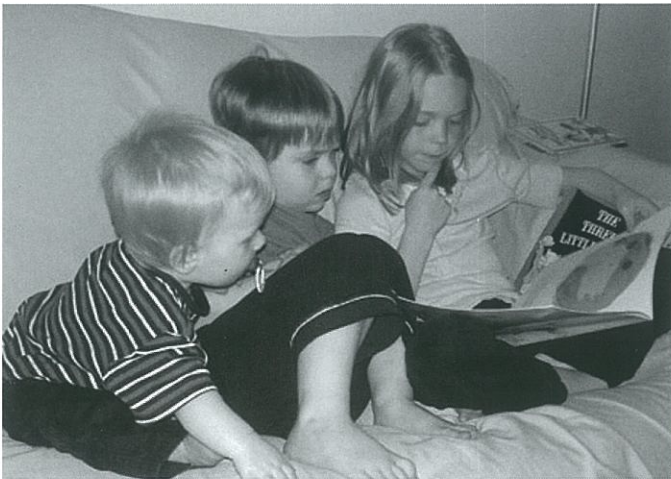
Learning to read for the first time requires a child to make some major conceptual leaps. These include realising that the spoken form of language consists of sounds which are combined in various ways and that words can be broken up into their component sounds, and component sounds can go together to make words. This is called phonemic awareness. Another important piece of learning is what is called the alphabetic principle, and that is gaining an awareness that individual sounds can be represented by letters of the alphabet, and that letters of the alphabet can signal certain sounds. As well as these two very important ideas, there are many ideas to be gained about the nature of reading and the nature of books. Let us now look at each of these three ideas one by one.

Phonemic awareness

Gaining phonemic awareness is actually fun and when young children are ready, around the age of about four or five, parents can play these kinds of games with them. The parent says "What word is this? C - A - T". That is, the parent sounds out the word and the child tries to recognise it. Note that the parent is not spelling the word, but is splitting up the sounds that make up the word. This game can be played when travelling in the car, walking along the street, or just sitting around. It should not be treated like a lesson, but should be played like a challenging game. When the child gets really good at doing this, then the child can become the one splitting up the sounds of the words for the parent to recognise. This is often highly amusing, because sometimes the way the child splits the words is very creative. This very simple but enjoyable game has a very important goal, mainly gaining phonemic awareness. For reading in an alphabetic language like English or Arabic, phonemic awareness is very important.

The alphabetic principle

Once learners have gained phonemic awareness, then understanding the alphabetic principle is the next big step to



take. Understanding the alphabetic principle means realising that letters can represent sounds and that sounds can be represented by letters. A useful way to practice this is by looking for the same letter in a piece of text, such as the newspaper. "Can you find any words which begin with t?" Note here, that the parent does not say "tee" for the letter t, but actually says the sound that the letter represents.

Many parents think that teaching their children the alphabet, that is to say A, B, C, D E, etc, is a good way of helping them begin to read. Learning the alphabet in this way has very little to do with reading. Learning to recognise the letter shapes is useful, but learning their names is not as useful as learning the sounds that they represent.

Learning about books and print

Probably the most important way that parents can prepare their children for reading is helping them to realise that reading is fun, and that if you can read, then you can access that fun yourself. Reading stories to children at bedtime and at other times is an excellent way of showing this. When parents read to children, the children should see this not as a lesson but as a very pleasant and enjoyable activity shared with the parent. While they listen to stories, children can learn many things about books. They don't have to be taught these things, but can observe them happen while they listen to the story. For example, they learn that books have pages, and that with English books you turn the pages from right to left. They learn that that there are words on these pages and that you read the words from left to right when reading English. They learn that the first line is at the top of the page and the next line follows under that. They also learn that books contain pictures as well as words, and that the pictures and the words relate to each other.

When they have been listening to stories and looking at the books for a reasonable amount of time, they may also recognise that there are big letters and small letters, that words are separated by spaces, and that there are question marks, full stops, commas, and exclamation marks. They also learn to take care of books, partly because they will want to read them again and other people will want to read them. It is also good if children see that their parents read and enjoy reading and gain obvious pleasure from it.

Parents can also help their children to learn through the experience approach to reading but they do not have to wait until their children go to school. Children can draw their pictures at home and get their parents to write what they say underneath them. Once again, this should be treated not as a lesson but as a fun thing to do.



We have looked at several useful things that parents can do to get their child ready for reading. Although these activities all have serious purposes, they need to be treated as things that the child enjoys and wants to do. If parents get too formal and serious about these things, they may turn the child away from reading. In such cases it would be better that nothing was done rather than that this negative effect occurs.

I hope I have shown that you don't have to be a trained reading teacher in order to help children get ready for reading and to take the first very important conceptual steps towards reading. Reading is one of the most important learned skills that a child will learn and any useful help along the way towards this skill is time well spent.



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Rachel Magdalen
Lange
UAE University
Al Ain

Who says they don't like READING?

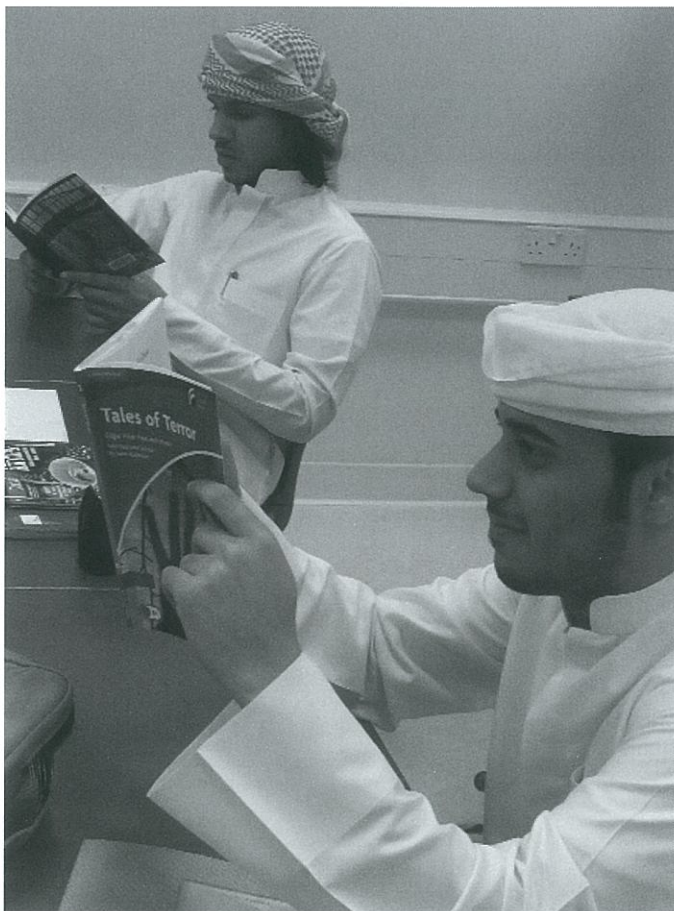
Summer school classes at UAEU, University General Requirements Unit, are hot and long. What is normally a 16 week class is packed into 6, with classes 6 days a week, four hours a day. Students can only take UGRU classes during the summer if they are repeating the course, so spirits sag, stress is high, and everybody is sweating. It is a tough teaching climate in more than one sense of the word.

Last summer, I taught Level One, which corresponds to a CEPA score of 150-164 (UAE National Exam). I am the coordinator of the level, but I do not teach during the year, so this was a chance to see how some of the new materials would work and remind myself what it's like to be in the trenches. The students were all taking the course for the third time. Given my familiarity with the curriculum and exams and their having worked through the book twice already, I decided to forgo the support of the text book and try something new. I would use worksheets, try different approaches to the readings, and, most importantly, I would focus on the Level One course objective of extensive reading.

One of my inspirations for the extensive reading part of the course was Paul Nation's 2008 book, *Teaching Vocabulary: Strategies and Techniques* in which he underscores the importance of basic vocabulary knowledge and recommends

a program of reading at the appropriate vocabulary level. A colleague of mine, Jan Cambrensis, had used Nation's tests to measure the vocabulary knowledge of the UGRU students, and repeating Level One students generally had a working knowledge of about 970 of the first two thousand words. It is likely that these third time repeaters had even fewer words, as indicated by their exam scores.

As vocabulary-building was one of my major objectives, I armed my students with two 'strategies'. First, I supplied them with 6 copies of the *Oxford Essential English-Arabic/Arabic-English Dictionary*. The monolingual dictionary they normally use requires a working knowledge of the first 2000 words of English, which these students do not have. The Oxford Essential is small, portable, comprehensive enough for a Level One class, and costs between 50 and 60 AED. The second vocabulary strategy was to make simple flash cards, as recommended by Nation. If they came across an unknown word in their reading, they were to make a card. The card had the target word on one side, and the definition, in English, Arabic or any other language of their choice on the other. I encouraged them to shuffle the cards and review them regularly. Simply making and using the cards was part of the course work grade.



The extensive reading part of the class was also simple. We would read quietly for the last 30 minutes every day. The students would do a book report on only one book during the whole course, with questions, pictures of the characters and a short summary. For the rest of the books, they merely had to read, record the title, author, and date read, along with a rating of how much they liked it. I wanted them to focus on getting into the stories, and to associate the time with relaxation and enjoyment, rather than comprehension questions and summaries. At times, I asked students why they liked or disliked a book, or recommended a specific title, but I tried to avoid interrogating to make sure they *really* read it. There would be no talking aloud, but this was a time when the students were free to get out their snacks and drinks, sit on the floor, and basically get comfortable however they wished. During this time, I read the same readers and recorded my own ratings of the books. When students completed a rating sheet, they posted it on the class bulletin board so that other students could see which books were the most popular.

I gathered graded readers from the library, our Independent Learning Center, and my own collection. These included the Macmillan Readers (adapted classics) at the Elementary Level, corresponding to around an A2 of the Common European Framework, which is consistent with the approximate level of the students. These readers have about 1100 headwords. Some of the most popular choices were from the Footprint Reading Library, from Thomson-Heinle. They have developed a series in tandem with *National Geographic*. Many of the students preferred these because they include information about different cultures and the natural world, instead of a fictional narrative. They are also at A2, but include only about 800 headwords. They categorize these at "pre-intermediate".

During the first week, many of the students were skeptical. They were concerned about passing the exam, and unconvinced that this was time well spent. I tried to explain the research and rationale behind extensive reading and that the process would, in fact, help them with the exam, but some remained doubtful. However, by the second week, they had adapted to the routine. As soon as 11:20 arrived, they quietly, uncomplainingly, and even happily chose their books, settled into their reading spots and simply read. There was none of the chatting or whining which occurred during essay writing or worksheets. Every last student was engaged in reading. No one asked to leave class early. Every day, I saw students passing around and using the dictionaries, without being prompted or quizzed. They wanted to understand the stories, and were genuinely curious about the meanings of words. There even were a couple of instances when a grammar activity took longer than I'd planned, and several students spoke up, "But Teacher, it's *reading time!*"

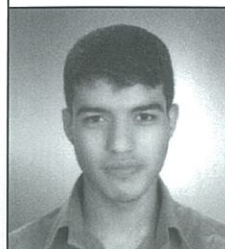
Since I arrived in the Emirates six years ago, I have repeatedly heard and believed that our students can't read, don't read, don't like to read, etc. Given the opportunity and the smallest amount of encouragement, however, it can become their favorite part of the day. Myth busted!

Reference:

Nation, I. (2008). *Teaching Vocabulary: Strategies and Techniques*. Boston, MA: Heinle.



Mohammed Hashem Al-Saftawi is 20 years old, and studies at Al-Azhar University in Gaza. He has been working on Tamer institute projects as a volunteer since 2008, and is a member of the Yaraat Literary Team as well. He also writes short stories and plays.



Mohammed Al-Saftawi

Tamer Institute
Palestine

Reading for community's cultural relief

I feel that our beautiful poetic Arabic language would never be sufficient for me to reflect and give enough credit to the rich experience that I've gained by being involved with Tamer's activities and projects. I often ask myself about that hidden implant that Tamer leaves in our minds and our souls once we come close to it. From the minute that I joined "Yara'at" - Tamer's young writers team - I knew that I was safe among a group of genuine writers and intellectuals who would weave their dreams with the sweetest taste possible, and would enlighten my dark night, and the city's night, just as the full moonlight on a bright summer night would.

Tamer (Tamer Institute for Community Education: www.tamerinst.org) organizes for book discussions to be held by staff and volunteers in most locations of the Palestinian cities, villages, and refugee camps, along with its ongoing campaign towards promoting reading in Palestinian society, and among the children and youth in particular. As a volunteer in this project, I'd like to share three typical stories from the field.

Some time ago, I was introduced to "Mabarrat Al Rahama" (*The Home of Merciful*) - an association that provides shelter to orphans and children with unknown genealogy - in order to launch a Book discussion program for the young tenants of

the place. In no time, I realized that "orphans and children with unknown genealogy" was neither an accurate nor a fair portrayal of the children in front of me, as I found myself hanging out with children that have the most gorgeous hearts and souls.

I arrived at the place as one of volunteers working with Tamer's projects in Gaza to promote reading. Our main task in this regard was to select a suitable story or a novel, read it with a group of the targeted children, and discuss it with them later on.

When I first met the young female tenants of the home, they were reluctant, and did not have answers to my simple question: *What is your dream for the future?* At that stage, none of them had read a book, apart from school-books. The six workshops designed for that target group went by smoothly and beautifully. We read a lot of books together and soon the girls started talking passionately about their future dreams. One of them wanted to become a physician, an engineer said a second, a math teacher said a third, and a journalist insisted a fourth one. It did not really matter what they said; what matters is that they knew that they can dream and work towards making their dreams come true.



When I was bidding them goodbye, I felt satisfied and pleased to hear many of them promising to follow up the book discussion sessions with their friends and with other people. At that moment, I felt that Tamer's vision and endeavor to empower our children and boost their abilities to dream and be creative had just been delivered.

My second story takes place in "al-Tagreed society" (*The Twitter*) in the city of Bit Hanon. It is one of those places that make you think you are heading to the heart of the sun, or at least the middle of nowhere.

My audience was a group of 14-17 year-old teenage boys and girls, except for one ten year-old boy who appeared to be so enthusiastic that I was unable to ask him to leave. Our book for the day was "Friends" by Kazomi Yomoto. All were very quiet until I finished telling the story and asked: "What changes would you make to the story if you were the writer?" Suddenly the place became full of life and noise as each wanted to say something and make a comment. Rawan would take out the episode where an old man, while trying to find his beloved woman, had to go out and kill a pregnant woman along with several citizens of a village. It was irrelevant and the story could do without it, Rawan thought.

The ten year-old shy, silent boy that was apparently provoked by Rawan's comment said: "I don't agree. I believe that the way the events developed in the story was inevitable, and the man could not have found his partner without doing what he had to do." The group was engaged in talk, discussing plot,

climax, and the characters in the book, in a way not far from what takes place in proper literary critique sessions.

Islam is a young twenty year-old woman who had dropped out of secondary school, and never liked to read. However, out of curiosity, she appeared in one of the book discussion meetings that I had arranged for a charitable women's association in Bit Hanon. The aim of the session was to train young adults to read and discuss children books, and our book for the day was "Leila's Bicycle" - a lovely, simple story for younger children.

Next day, Islam appeared again and told us how excited she and her family were the night before, when she started to read the story aloud for them. They were watching the TV as usual, but one of them decided to turn the TV off as each of the 15 family members lined up demanding to be heard by the rest of the family while reading the same story in their own way. Later on, we learnt that it became an evening ritual at Islam's house to turn off the TV whenever all family members were gathered in the sitting room, as one of them would sit there and read for the rest, with the child in first grade and the 50 year-old man participating equally.

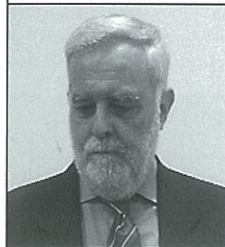
Islam's story provides a gateway for me to talk about the Astrid Lingrin award. Astrid Lingrin was a profound Swedish children's writer that, through the story of her life, set a great example for all the children of the world. Lingrin has been honored and recognized by giving her name to the most important international children's book award. In 2009, the Astrid Lingrid award was granted to the Tamer Institute for community Education.

Finally, I feel I need to tell you that Islam is planning to go back to school to finish her studies. Once again, I find that Tamer's philosophy behind reading books' has hit the target.

Reading is like a very rich cloud that never runs out of water... More and more rain would always come down to water the crops.



John is Head Librarian at the Petroleum Institute in Abu Dhabi and has worked in a variety of academic libraries in a career that spans nearly 40 years in Australia and a number of Asian countries. He has experienced the tremendous changes that have occurred in libraries while observing the different reading habits of students. He still believes in the value of the printed word and plans to spend part of his retirement reading all the books he has not had time to read.



John Rogan
The Petroleum Institute
Abu Dhabi

Obituary

A Death in the Profession or The Death of a Profession

It is strange to look back over a professional career which for me spans nearly 40 years and wonder if the profession is going the way of bus conductors or photocopy attendants. If one listens to some of the pundits, the hard copy book is dead and the Internet is set to completely abolish the need, not only of books, but also of Libraries, as we know them. If the book and libraries go, so the pundits say, the need for professional librarians will also go.

I wonder if the same discussions went on at the time of the invention of the printing press, when Europe moved from laboriously produced hand written books, to books produced by the new moveable type. Moving to the twentieth century the introduction of the mass produced paperback also presented new challenges for libraries. If books were so cheap why bother with collecting books at all in a library?

Within my own professional career, the demise of the book and or the print library has been predicted on a number of occasions. Back in the 1970's and early 1980's microfilm and fiche were going to replace the paper based books. Remember the predictions of the paperless office. If Hewlett Packard had believed the predictions, they would never have gone into the computer printer business.

In this brave new world there has been a lot of talk of e-books. These are books which are available electronically and read on a standard computer screen or specially produced readers. This new technology has some way to go, I think, before it is universally accepted. We have one major specialized electronic book collection Knovel which allows for interactive rather than just passive use.

From my perspective the printed book will be with us a while longer. The ubiquitous unique International Standard Book Number which appears on all books has recently expanded, from a 10 digit code to a 13 digit number, to cope with the increase in books being published. Universities are still building or expanding libraries. In these new libraries, there will be more computers, dramatically less bound volumes of scholarly journals, but still a large number of printed books both old and new and, of course, readers.

Librarians have been adapting to a changing role as the technology of recording human knowledge has changed since the time of the Library in Alexandria. This will continue. As Mark Twain once said "Reports of my death are greatly exaggerated". I think it is the same for printed books and Librarians. We, librarians, will be around for a few more millennia yet, at least.

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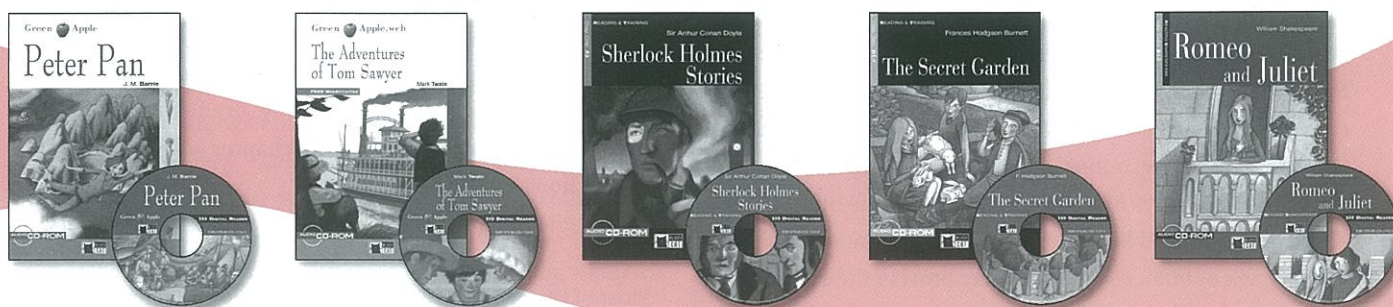


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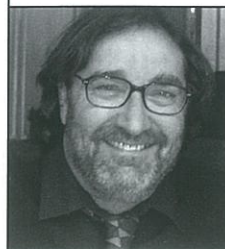


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Robert Hill taught for many years at Italian universities in Verona and Milan. He has given talks and seminars on reading all over the world, including the UAE, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain. He is series consultant for Black Cat Graded Readers and author of *The Black Cat Guide to Graded Readers*.



Robert Hill
*Black Cat Publishing
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OPENING BOOKS, STARTING READING

Does it ever happen in your daily life that someone, without any introduction, suddenly hands you a book, already open at the first page, and instructs you to start reading? If that has ever happened to you, it must have been in exceptional circumstances!

In reality, various things may happen before we start reading: friends may recommend a book, or we might be influenced by reviews in the media; a film might make us curious to read the book it was based on; we might browse through a catalogue, online or an 'old-fashioned' paper one, looking at the covers of books and skimming the blurbs (the short, 'appetising' descriptions in catalogues, and inside or on the back of book covers); we may browse the shelves in a bookshop, where we certainly look at the books, open them, sample parts of them; we may find we need some information about something, in the case of choosing non-fiction, or simply want to explore our interests further.

These natural procedures can all be replicated when we introduce learners to reading in the foreign language, whether they are our own children or learners of any age.

Clearly, we want to do this to make reading in the foreign language as natural and enjoyable as possible, but we also have a methodological agenda of aims to facilitate learners' reading, such as:

- activating what learners already know about the subject, be it ever so little: learners should bring their knowledge to a text
- encouraging learners to make predictions, because good readers are constantly predicting: how the sentence will end, how the chapter will end, how the book will end
- eliciting or pre-teaching some relevant vocabulary.

Most of the procedures we can use require little preparation and time, but they certainly reward the effort. Here is a brief list of tried and trusted procedures.

- Take an attractively illustrated book catalogue and elicit first descriptions of the covers of the books and then predictions about the contents of those books. Look at the blurbs and pick out key words together.

- A longer activity for a class is to cut out several covers of different books from a catalogue, cut out the blurbs separately, mix them up and ask learners to match them correctly. This practises scanning skills but also nurtures awareness of genres – horror, thriller, romance, humour, etc. – as well as arousing curiosity.
- Before starting a well-illustrated book with younger learners, try ‘walking’ through the book first: that is, looking together through all the pictures, eliciting descriptions and predictions. Useful vocabulary will come up, and expectations will be aroused. As a game, the teacher can say ‘Find a picture containing/ which shows...’ and the learner(s) race(s) through the book to find the relevant picture.
- With a class of older learners, use photocopies or electronic slides of some illustrations (better if they are ‘action scenes’) in scrambled order, and invite learners to suggest the order in which they might occur.
- With older learners, if a story has chapter headings, photocopy the contents page(s), cut up the chapter headings and stick them on a piece of paper in scrambled order; photocopy this and distribute it. (Alternatively, simply write the chapter headings out of order on the board.) Ask learners to put them in the order they think they will occur in the text and – and this is where language skills and awareness of narrative come in! – explain their reasons.

So far, in all these activities to do before starting a book, I have emphasised encouraging prediction. I feel this is vital to transfer a ‘predicting attitude’ from reading in the first language to reading in the foreign language(s). Consider how often storytellers exploit surprise and suspense. Well, suspense and surprise would have absolutely no effect if we had no expectations at all about how the plot is going to develop! This proves that we are always predicting when we read.

To encourage prediction, teachers often read out or write on the board the first sentence(s) of a story. This seems logical, but first sentences are not always useful for prediction. For other ‘points of entry’ into a whole story or just a chapter,

let us take inspiration from another genre which aims to stimulate our appetites and our predictions – film trailers. Trailers never use beginnings, choosing instead the most exciting parts of films. Furthermore, they don’t make explicit the narrative connection between the extracts. So, here are some ideas for using text elements that are not first sentences.

- Any exciting or intriguing sentence from the text – even the last sentence – can be extracted, and learners asked ‘What do you think might happen to lead up to this?’.
- Extract some significant sentences from the chapter (minimum 3, maximum 6), write them on the board in scrambled order, and ask the class to suggest the order in which they will occur. Inevitably, learners find they have to imagine how a plot might develop.
- Write on the board some words or phrases (minimum 3, maximum 6) that are significant in the chapter. Learners predict in what context they will occur: for example, in relation to which character, or to what possible event. (This is also a good opportunity to pre-teach any lexis that might be unknown.)
- Extract a short, exciting and/or important passage and eliminate some of the words (gap-filling procedure). This procedure aims to encourage prediction, not test language, so the words eliminated should concern plot and/or character (i.e. don’t cut articles, prepositions, etc.). Learners suggest words for the gaps: they are really motivated to compare their ideas with the text when they read! As the aim is prediction, learners can even suggest words in their own language. (The teacher could translate any words suggested that he/she thinks are useful).

The fundamental aim, however, of these activities – and other pre-reading activities – is to prepare and encourage our learners to read, so as soon as our learners looks ready and eager to read, start reading!



Helena Frith Powell is a writer and journalist. Before moving to Abu Dhabi she wrote a column for the Sunday Times about life in France called 'The French Mistress'. She also writes regularly for the Daily Mail, the Daily Telegraph and other major UK publications. Helena is the author of five books, among them 'Two Lipsticks and a Lover' was a bestseller and was translated into five languages. Her most recent book, 'The Viva Mayr Diet', was published in May 2009. She is published by Gibson Square, Random House and Harper Collins. Her first novel 'Love in a Warm Climate' will be published in February 2011. Helena is the Editor of M magazine, part of the National newspaper in Abu Dhabi. Helena was educated at Durham University, is married to Rupert Wright, who is also a writer, and has three children aged seven, ten and eleven.



Helena Frith Powell
The National
Abu Dhabi

Reading Champion

What memories do you have of reading or being read to when you were a child?

I became addicted to all the C.S Lewis books when I was around eight years old. It started with 'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe.' Then I wanted them all, desperately. One Christmas, my stepfather, a penniless artist at the time, was out looking for a Christmas present for me. What I really wanted was the whole C.S. Lewis box set, but he couldn't afford it. The friend he was with, now a leading BBC war correspondent, stuffed it under his jumper and walked out of Waterstone's in Oxford. I figure it started a reading addiction and I ended up spending much more money on books than I would have done had I not had that early exposure, so I hope I have made up for it!

Can you name a book(s) that you particularly liked when you were younger?

The first book I became obsessed by is Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights. I still am obsessed actually. I was about 15 when I first read it and I headed straight up to the Haworth moors in search of my own Heathcliff. I never found him of course but the obsession stayed. I became a life member of the Bronte Society and I collect issues of Wuthering Heights. I re-read it a couple of years ago, and I still love it. My stepdaughter is studying it for GCSE now and I love helping her with her essays on it.

What do you read with your children?

'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe' of course! And The Little Prince is another favourite. Two of them are avid readers and now read to me which is lovely. The third has yet to discover books, which makes me sad.

What do you enjoy reading for yourself?

Anything from PG Wodehouse to biographies. I love the feel of books and will never dismiss a topic.

What are you reading at the moment?

I have a few things on the go; Arabian Sands by Wilfred Thesiger, which is one of those books that I have felt for so long I should have read on moving here. I am also reading a collection of short stories called 'The Book Lovers' Appreciation Society,' written for women in aid of breast cancer. And I am doing a history of art course so leafing through my course book too.

How do you find time for reading?

I WISH I had more time. I rarely do actually have the time to just sit and read. I would love to take a week's holiday and just read everything I still have on my wish list and do nothing else. One of my resolutions for next year is that I will MAKE time to read. But at the moment I read on weekends and before I go to sleep. In fact I often fall asleep with a book on my head (not a good look).

How would you encourage students in particular to read?

I would tell them that not reading is like having cataracts. You are practically blind. There is a whole world out there that you will know nothing about unless you read, and your life will be so much poorer as a result. Reading changed my life (I became a writer). The first time I saw my daughter Bea laugh out loud because of a line in a book and turn to me and say "Mummy, this book is SO awesome" was one of the highlights of my mothering days so far, because I understood that she has now got the reading bug and she will never lose it.

THE DALY COMMUNITY LIBRARY

The Library opened in 1978 in the Community Centre Built in St Andrew's Church compound, then on the Corniche. The Library opened with 500 books donated by The Ranfurly Library formed during World War II to provide troops serving overseas with books, which in turn had been given by public libraries in UK when 'weeding' their own shelves. By 1978 the Ranfurly Library was closing down, the original need for them having ended, but as there were no bookshops in Abu Dhabi and the ubiquitous paperback had not arrived we knew a library would fill a need.

We had no money and Mr. Michael Daly, Snr., kindly offered to provide us with shelves with lockable doors which could be fixed to the walls of the Community Centre. Sadly, his wife had recently died and so we decided to call it The Daly Community Library in her memory.

The plans for the new St Andrew's Centre which was to be built on its present site did not include any provision for the Library. We were told a room could be built, but we would need to provide the funds and in addition pay a small annual rental plus the annual insurance. This we have done and were able in 1997 to pay for a small extension to be able to shelve the increasing number of books which now number 7,000 plus.

The Library is open to all residents in Abu Dhabi whatever their nationality or religion on payment of an annual subscription. The books are all in English and are fiction and non-fiction with a separate section for children. There are no books on Christianity, but some on Islam and are selected carefully so as not to offend the susceptibilities of those around us.

The Library is at St Andrews Centre, Mushrif Area and is between The British School Al Khubairat and Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Mosque. It is open on Saturdays 11-1pm, Sundays 3.30-7.30pm, Wednesdays 11-1pm and Thursdays 5-6.30pm. The Library is staffed by volunteers. The telephone number is 02 4478386.

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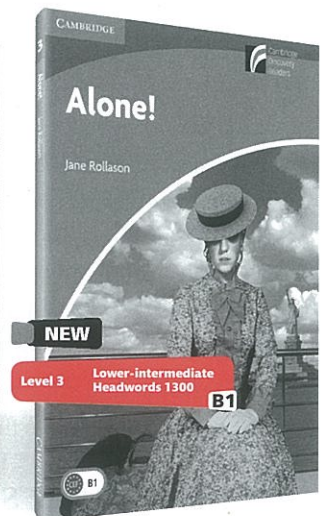
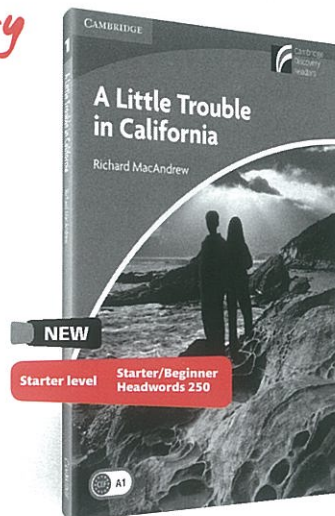
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Katrina Kinsella was until recently Young Learner Coordinator in the British Council, Sharjah. She has been involved in EFL teaching, training and management in the Czech Republic, the UK, Myanmar, Vietnam and the UAE.



Katrina Kinsella
British Council
Sharjah

Sharjah Loves Reading!

A YEAR AT THE BRITISH COUNCIL, SHARJAH

In British Council Sharjah, we have had a wonderful year of reading! From overhauling our library and promoting extensive reading programmes to dedicating much of our teacher-training to teaching reading skills to Arabic learners, we have been very busy! The result has been more people reading and, most importantly, more people enjoying reading. By sharing our year with you, perhaps we can inspire other schools and centres and be inspired by your ideas and events.

At the beginning of the year we re-systematised and reopened our reading library. With a stock of new titles and audio-books, more and more of our learners have been joining up. As part of an ongoing programme of encouraging students to read for pleasure, we actively promote library membership throughout the centre and in all classes. One of the favourite books is the adventure story *The Drive to Dubai* by Julie Till. Readers love the action-packed plot and they find the Emirati context and characters most engaging. It was wonderful to find such a good story embedded in the local culture and we hope to find more books like this.

Young Readers

As part of National Customer Service Week, we held a story telling day. Past and current YL learners and friends were

invited to attend an interactive story telling session. One of our teachers told three engaging stories, including Roald Dahl's *Fantastic Mr Fox*, with lots of activities to help foster imagination and love of language. The children loved the session and requested another as soon as possible. We did just that, and had story-telling events using books such as *Sinbad*, the lovely poem *The Kangaroo from Wallamalloo* and the children's classic, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Holding story telling events with unknown groups of children can be quite nerve-wracking as you never know who will show up, how old they are, whether they know the story, have enough language to understand etc. For *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, we spent time with flashcards of food, first checking the words then playing games such as word grabs and memory. After this, we discussed the life cycle of a butterfly and why a caterpillar might need to eat lots and lots of leaves.....not chocolate or sausages! Using the storybook, the children shouted out what they could see in the pictures and those that could, read along with me answering questions as we went along. After absorbing the shock of what the very hungry caterpillar actually ate, the children retold the story then we prepared a short fun drama to show for the parents waiting outside. 45 minutes: Short, simple and lots of fun.

Many classes, both YL and adults, use class sets of readers.



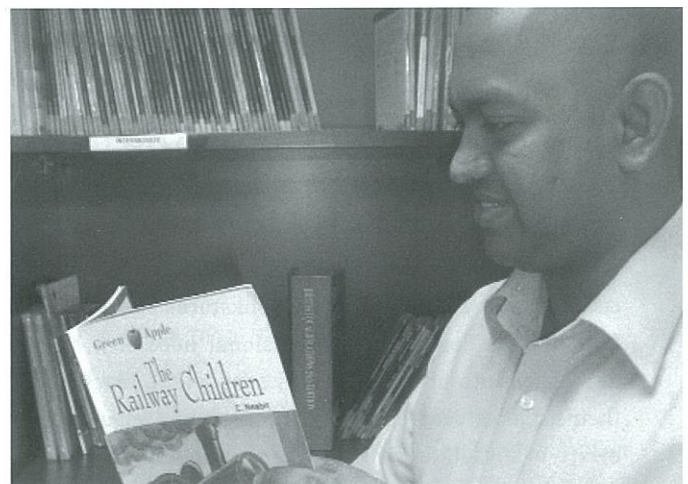
The Selfish Giant by Oscar Wilde has proved immensely popular with juniors and adults. Our Junior 3 class read Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park* and they worked on a fun, cross-curricular project about dinosaurs. Reading at home and in class, they went on to research information about Jurassic carnivores and herbivores, made puppets and even become palaeontologists for a while by reassembling fossils into dino-skeletons! The class performed some excellent theatre based on their reading which was enjoyed by other classes. Some of the girls in class asked for something less dino-centric/boy-friendly for the next book and so chose *Gulliver's Travels*.

Adult Readers

Many adults have little time to themselves and, as we often find, many have little background in reading for pleasure. In fact, one of our Pre-intermediates said that their class reader was the first book he had read in either Arabic or English. Motivation, language level and cultural appropriacy are also some of the other critical factors in engaging adult readers. A variety of readers (many of them the same as the Young Learners, such as *Jurassic Park*) are used, alongside extracts of novels from websites such as www.lovereadings.co.uk or www.gutenberg.org.

Using class time effectively has helped readers to find the motivation to access reading in their own time and taking time to explain the rationale behind the choice of book has paid off. Finding appropriate books can be very difficult at lower levels. However, one class of beginners thoroughly enjoyed reading a children's book after their teacher introduced it to them, linking it carefully with their syllabus. What an accomplishment to read an entire book at beginner level!

Our adult upper-intermediates were assigned class sets of a lower-level book designed for younger learners: *The Happy Prince* by Oscar Wilde. There were worries that the class might feel patronised by reading a children's book so the aims of this were clearly laid out: to allow them access to reading for pure pleasure without struggling with a dictionary, to get them to read an entire book in a short space of time and to give them the opportunity to read it with their children at home. Their first task was to read the book at home. It was quite a shock to find the class, who had freely admitted to not liking reading, engrossed in reading the book in their class breaktime and requesting to read it in class time. Then we held a discussion about the book, including the plot, main themes, characters and personal reactions. Any fears about the learners feeling patronised were soon allayed as they all said they had thoroughly enjoyed it, one man telling us that he had been transported back to his childhood. We then focused on story-telling intonation. Stress, intonation and pausing patterns and features were identified then drilled. Learners practised these first by reading aloud, then by reformulating and retelling parts of the tale. For homework, they took another short, YL class reader home and they retold parts of the



story the following week with some lovely intonation! We are promoting reading more and more in Sharjah and look forward to hearing what other centres are having success with so we can follow suit.

Here's to another great year of reading in 2011!



Alan Pulverness is the author / co-author of a number of *ELT* textbooks, most recently (with Mary Spratt and Melanie Williams) *The TKT Course* (CUP 2005; 2011). He has edited students' editions of *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* (Cornelsen 2005; 2007) and was editorial adviser for *The Literary Labyrinth* (SEI 1989; 1991) and *The Worldwide Reader* (OUP 2001). From 2001 to 2005 he was co-chair of the British Council's Oxford Conference on the Teaching of Literature.



Alan Pulverness
Norwich Institute for
Language Education
United Kingdom

Now read on...

Readability in

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

For the past few years I've been working with teachers in various parts of the world who are interested in the power of extensive reading and keen for their teenage students to move beyond the simplified or graded reader designed for language learners. They want their young adult learners to have the same authentic reading experience as their native-speaker counterparts, and to gain exposure to a greater range of language by immersing themselves in authentic texts. It's in this context that I've been reading a great deal of what used to be called teen fiction and is now more often categorised by publishers and bookstores as young adult fiction. This began as a professional necessity, but has developed into precisely what I advocate to teachers and their students: reading for pleasure. At first, I felt awkwardly aware of myself as an adult reading novels written for a teenage audience, and reassured myself that I was reading 'in role', a teacher-reader impersonating a student-reader. But very soon I found I was losing that stuffy self-consciousness and surrendering to what the French literary theorist Roland Barthes called 'the pleasure of the text'. Reading Anthony Horowitz's sequence of thrillers about teenage superspy Alex Rider, or Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* fantasy trilogy, or Malorie Blackman's *Noughts and Crosses* quartet set in a parallel UK where the white majority and black minority have been reversed, I have rediscovered

some of the simple but powerful pleasures in reading that I have rarely enjoyed since I 'graduated' to reading adult fiction at secondary school.

What all these books, and many others written for the young adult market, have in common is, in a word, readability. This isn't the *readability* that applied linguists talk about in terms of lexical load, sentence length, structural complexity, but the readability that makes a book *unputdownable* – a word that entered the English language in the late 1940s, the great age of thriller writing but a quality of good writing that is not restricted to thrillers. I have now become professionally curious as to the qualities of prose fiction for young adults that produce this kind of readability, and I have identified three particular features.

The first is a device common to much (though by no means all) young adult fiction – the use of a first-person narrator. In any work of fiction the decision to tell the story from a single point of view colours the narrative by restricting the quantity and the quality of information the reader can be given, but in writing for teenage readers it creates an intimate bond between reader and narrator (often a year or two older than the assumed reader). Here's the opening of *Surprising Joy* by Valerie Bloom:

D'you know what my problem is? My mouth doesn't know when to stay shut, and one of these days I just know it's going to get me into serious trouble. It's not that I talk too much, although I know some people might argue with that. If that was the trouble I could probably force myself to keep quiet sometimes. The problem is that every now and then I blurt out what I'm thinking without meaning to.

Joy is a young teenage girl, brought up by her grandmother in Jamaica. The reader is immediately drawn in by her very particular and thoroughly engaging voice. The very first sentence buttonholes the reader in a voice that demands our attention. We feel compelled to read on, fascinated to know what kind of story Joy has to tell.

That first sentence does something else, too, which is an important characteristic of young adult fiction: it plunges the reader into the narrative without any preamble, any scene-setting or character sketches. As soon as we open the book, we are instantaneously in Joy's world, seeing that world through her eyes. Nothing has actually happened yet, but we feel that it will. Often, however, this kind of arresting opening does more than just establish a strong voice; it draws the reader into a story in the most direct way imaginable – though dramatic action. Here's an example:

It wasn't mine.

I didn't drop it, but the boy in the queue said I did.

It was a negative of a photograph, one on its own, all scratched and beaten up. I couldn't even see what it was a negative of because his finger and thumb were blotting out most of it. He was holding it out to me like nothing else was going to happen until I took it, like he had nothing else to do but wait.

Jenny Valentine *Broken Soup*

Doesn't this make you want to read on, to find out who the boy is, why he says the narrator had dropped the negative, and most of all, what will be revealed when the negative is printed? The reader is 'thrown in at the deep end', where we have to sink or swim, a feeling that our students are almost certainly familiar with from movies and TV shows where the viewer is not given a leisurely introduction or slow lead-in, but immediately involved in some kind of action and has to work out who's who and what's happening (why comes

later). As parents and teachers, we are concerned about young people growing up as passive consumers of packaged entertainment, but when stories open like this, the reader (or viewer) is made to interact with the text, to pose questions, to speculate on possible answers, to predict what's going to happen next and how the plot will unfold.

A third factor that makes so many young adult novels so readable is the balance they often achieve between what is familiar and what is fresh and surprising. Young readers (and many adults) like to recognise settings, characters, relationships that they know very well, but they also expect some degree of novelty, something they haven't read about before. This perhaps explains why so many of the most successful books for young adult readers appear as trilogies, tetralogies or sequences of multiple volumes. It explains why having completed her *Noughts and Crosses* trilogy, Malorie Blackman added a fourth title to the series, why some of the most successful recent young adult fiction (the *Gone* novels by Michael Grant, the *Hunger Games* series by Suzanne Collins, the *Chaos Walking* books by Patrick Ness) have all been trilogies. It explains why publishers are looking desperately for 'the new Harry Potter, and why, when I've read *Scorpia Rising*, the ninth and final volume in the Alex Rider series, which is published next March, I'll be looking out for a new series that will give me as much reading pleasure.

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Neil McBeath served as a uniformed Education Officer in the Royal Air Force of Oman from 1981-2005. He then taught for two years for BAE Systems in Saudi Arabia. He is now a Course Coordinator at the Language Centre, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman.



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Great Expectations: The GRAPHIC NOVEL

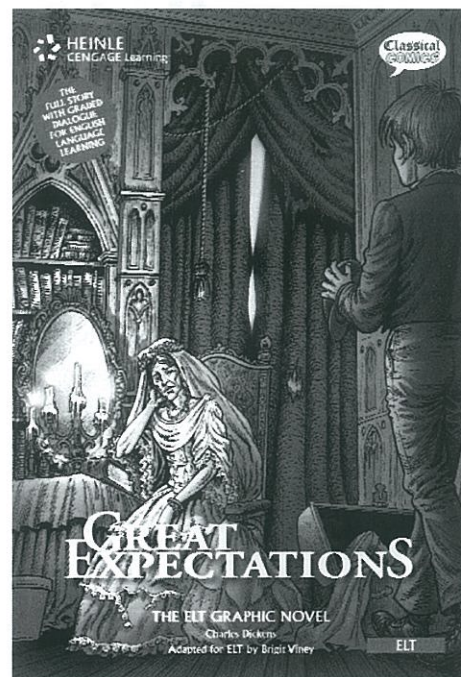
'Great Expectations: The Graphic Novel' was Adapted for ELT by Brigit Viney and published in 2010 by Heinle Cengage Learning.

This graphic novel, "Great Expectations", is firmly in the tradition of *bandes dessinées*. It is a fairly solid book, printed on thick art paper, and it comes with its own set of 3 CD ROMs. These offer a dramatized reading of the entire novel, so it would be perfectly possible for a student to read and simultaneous listen to the dramatized version. Indeed, this would be an excellent activity for an Independent Learning Centre or for self-study.

At the end of the book there is a four page glossary (pp.148-151) which focuses on the lexis highlighted in the text. The definitions are taken from the Collins COBUILD Dictionary, and the book is rated B1-B2 on the CEF scale, so only low frequency vocabulary – like "hulks" – is listed.

There is a two page chapter summary (pp.152-153) which focuses on characters rather than on plot, and a further two page biography of Dickens (pp.154-155). This material serves no obvious purpose, but it is interesting to the extent that it refers to the author's own boyhood in the Kentish marshes. It also leads neatly into "The Context of Great Expectations" (p.156) and "A Tale of Two Endings" (p.157) both of which offer more interesting background information. The first outlines the rapidly changing social conditions that applied at the time when the novel is set, making it clear that, at that time, it was still just possible for someone like Pip to become social mobile. The second shows the difficulties that faced Dickens as a "popular" novelist – give the public what they want, or risk losing your popularity.

The strength of this book lies in its vivid illustrations and the clever way in which Jen Green has constructed a script using Dickens' original dialogue. The marshes are as sinister as anything from David Lean's (1946) classic film. Miss Havisham, who describes herself as "yellow skin and bone" looks the part, and is all the more gothic in the rags of her wedding dress.



Estelle is haughty but with the rather blank expression that often goes with real beauty, and Pip is engagingly naïve. Jo, perhaps, does not age quite as much as he should, but that is a quibble.

I would recommend this book. It will capture and engage the attention of most students. There is sufficient drama to alert and satisfy the boys, and for Gulf Arab girls there is the charming Biddy, who is one of the most clear sighted people in the novel, and who finds domestic happiness. Having finished this version, moreover, some students might be tempted to move on to a Graded reader with the same title.

Fajr Fuad Abbas is a Kuwaiti Teaching Assistant in the English Language Studies Program at the Australian College of Kuwait. She is part of a committee that is initiating a reading program to encourage students in the English foundation program to read for pleasure. She has a Bachelors degree in English Language and Literature from Kuwait University, and is continuing her studies there to obtain a Masters degree in Comparative Literature.



Fajr Fuad Abbas
Australian College
Kuwait

ACK to Start Reading Program: Steps towards “Books **N** Boxes”

One cannot deny the importance of reading, especially in an ESL environment where reading can have multiple benefits for students learning English. By increasing a learners' exposure to the language, reading can increase vocabulary, familiarize students with the structure of the language they are learning, improve writing skills and lead the way to critical thinking. Combined, these benefits can create more independent and autonomous learners (Bell, 1998).

Unfortunately, one can also not deny the fact that reading is not a common habit in our part of the world. The only reading that learners are exposed to is within an academic environment, and so they are not familiar with the idea of reading for pleasure. How can we introduce extensive reading into an ESL program while maintaining this notion of reading for pleasure?

A group of staff in the ELS department at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), enthusiastic about reading themselves, are working to find a solution to this problem. Under the supervision of the Head of the English Department, Ms. Camille Bondi, Instructors Raewyn Court and Lama Jamalaldin, Teaching Assistants Fajr Abbas, Fajer Al-Rashid, Fawaz Al-Fares, and Shahad Al-Fadhel, and

Academic Administrative Officer Fatima Ghalib, along with the teaching staff, are about to start a reading program in the Foundation Department, with hopes that they can reinforce the importance of reading for pleasure.

The process began with input from TESOL Arabia READ SIG Chair Tom Le Seelleur, who provided the team with a list of books he thought would interest the students at ACK. After obtaining some samples, the reading program team held feedback sessions with a selection of students. The group members gathered information about how the students wanted the program to run, asking questions like “What types of books would you like to read?” and “Do you want to take the books home over the weekend or to read them in class?” This was a vital step in the process of initiating the reading program because it was of utmost importance that the students were comfortable with the way the program ran for it to succeed.

The team then set to work, selecting readers and placing orders from different publishers. This was not an easy task, as they had to ensure that the content was interesting and engaging, that it would cater for the different tastes of the students, and that it was culturally appropriate. Also, the

selected readers had to have a good grading system so that learners from different English language proficiency levels could benefit from the program.

The team finally decided on a structure for the reading program. The extensive reading sessions should take place in class, in 20-30 minute slots, a couple of times a week. The instructor brings along a box full of books with content ranging in genres, themes and levels to ensure that the students have a good variety of books to choose from. The students choose a book that seems interesting, then sit down and read it for the allocated time. No strings attached! A name was suggested for the program: "Books 'n Boxes".

A lot of planning has gone into the initiation of this project as the team insists on getting it right from the very beginning. It

has been said that a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. We hope to launch our reading program at the beginning of next semester and we hope it turns out to be as exciting as our vision. If it is successful, we would like to pass on the torch to neighbouring institutions and encourage schools in Kuwait and neighbouring countries to pay close attention to reading and its benefits.

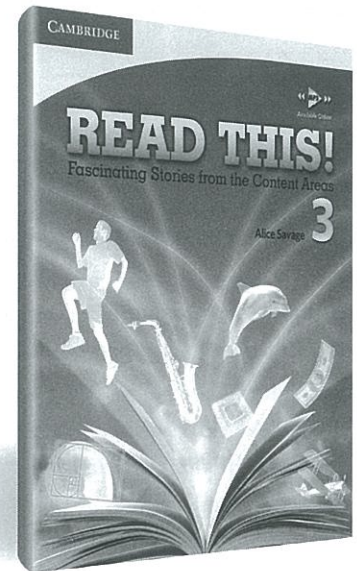
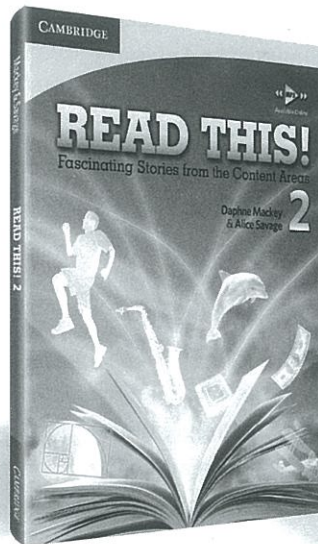
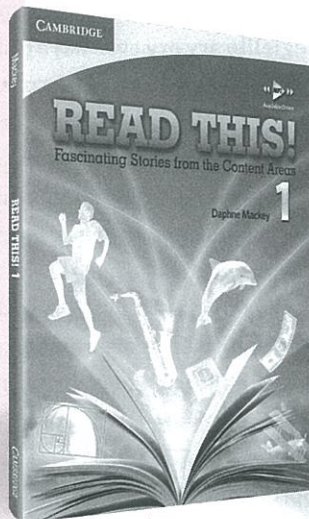
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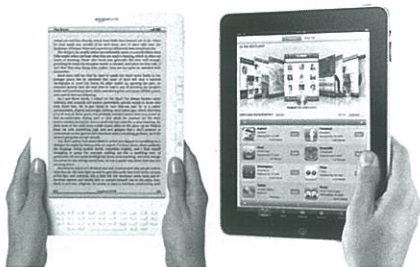
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Fairlie is an Instructor in the Academic Bridge Program at Zayed University. She has presented on the topics of Reading and ICT nationally and internationally. Her passion is for reading, in all its forms, and she hopes to inspire her children and her students to be avid readers.



Fairlie Atkinson
Zayed University
Dubai

Reading Doesn't Just Have To Be About Books



The technology train seems to have left the station, and many people who are avid readers missed its departure. Who wants a Kindle,

Ipad or Sony E-Reader when you can enjoy breathing in the smell of a newly printed book, and relish its comforting weight in your hands? Many of our students; that's who. We are teaching a generation that wants instant stimulus, all-in-one devices, and something they can pimp out with a different cover every day. Preferably one that matches their outfit.

So how do we keep up with the new generation and continue to foster a love of reading? The answer is by finding great sites or apps online that get our students **wanting to read in any format**. Technology does not need to replace books, nor does it need to be the only tool we use to the detriment of others, *but it can be used as a motivator and a stimulant.*

Creating Books

Creativity does not need to be confined to the art classroom. Students love to work in groups and enjoy producing things to share with each other. There are a number of websites where young readers can create illustrated books. Story Book maker



programs are available on seussville.com, disney.go.com, and the **British Council** site. Students drag and drop words into colorful pages, and create stories that can be shared. **Carnegielibrary.org** even has a program that allows students to print their stories in a pdf format to share when completed. For more advanced young readers there are sites such as **smokeybear.com** that generate stories after the participant has answered questions about themselves. Students can enjoy reading personalized stories that detail their adventures based on the answers they have given to the questions. Giving students a chance to interact with their reading materials allows them to be active receptors, and stimulates them to engage with the content and audience.

Online Libraries

One problem faced by many educators is the lack of appropriate reading material in their institutions' libraries. It may be too difficult, too boring or age inappropriate. The good news is that online libraries often have far more material than our physical libraries do. **The International Children's Digital Library** has stories for kids in many different



languages, with easy to navigate pages and a great selection of books. For teenagers and young adults, there are a plethora of free graphic novels that can be downloaded and read online. While some of these will not be culturally suitable, there are many out there that are. Don't be scared of graphic novels as our students appreciate the addition of pictures. Additionally, educhoices.org has a list of 25 online libraries that have everything from Jane Austen to cook books! These libraries have books for every age and reading level, and most are also excellent reference libraries.

News and Current Affairs



Probably the least interesting area for students is news and current affairs, but two sites that make news interesting are breakingnewsenglish.com and newsademic.com. Breaking News has audio and activities, while Newsademic resembles a print newspaper. Both contain simplified versions of the news. For a bit of fun, both **Time Magazine** and **National Graphic** produce great online sites for elementary school age readers. They are bright, interactive and stimulating. For older students the **BBC World Service** also has a fantastic site for ESL students, and is not to be missed. It combines the news with grammar and vocabulary activities and is very user friendly. All of these sites cover topics that appear in the IELTS exam and are an excellent resource for helping students get to grips with content as well as skills.

Skills

Sifting through the internet for well-written texts that include reading exercises is time consuming and often frustrating. As with any topic, the Internet contains the good, the bad and the complete rubbish. However, there are a few sites that do the sifting for you. The ESL Independent Study Lab on the **Legacy and Clark** site (<http://legacy.lclark.edu/~krauss/toppicks/reading.html>) and the **Saint Michael's College** site (http://academics.smcvt.edu/cbauer-ramazani/Links/esl_reading.htm) have detailed lists of good sites suitable for adult ESL learners. **Ken Schmidt** of **Tohoku Gakuin University** has also done the sifting for you in a TESL EJ volume 4 contribution (www.cc.kyoto-su.ac.jp/information/tesl-ej/ej13/int.html) with an extensive list of reading sites. Sites that teachers commonly use like miguellmlop.com, 5minuteenglish.com, eslreading.org and rong-chang.com have a lot of good short stories and articles with exercises suitable for intermediate learners, but these sites get a bit monotonous. Neither

do they really cover skimming and scanning skills. For those two crucial skills, teachers can try the 42explore.com/skim site that has also done the sifting on skimming and scanning exercises for you.

Mobile Reading

While many people in their twenties and thirties are incredibly computer savvy, the next generation takes mobile know-how to a new level. Book Apps are the easiest way of getting our students to read instead of sitting hunched over their phones sending text messages. Apple alone has hundreds of book apps for ipad, imacs and iphones, but the best thing they have is a list of the top 50 free book apps on their **apple store** site. There you can download free comics, classics, kids books, audio books and teen reading. **Mnybks.net** is also a good place to go to download books for mobile phones. The site doesn't look very pretty, but there are hundreds of books on it. A more advanced version of the same concept is tx2ph.com which also has a nice variety of books for teens and adults. For students who are allergic to carrying around books with them, when you ask them to bring a book to read in class, mobile book apps ensure they have access to a good book at all times.



Lastly, do you still like having books read to you? I know I certainly do, and so do my students, who come from a culture with a very strong oral tradition. Lately we have been enjoying storylineonline.net and speakaboos.com. While these are primarily stories for children, they contain vocabulary and cultural or factual information unfamiliar to my students. We have had some very good group discussions on the content and have been keeping live vocabulary logs in Google docs that students have been contributing to.



Reading doesn't need to just be about sitting down with a good book or trawling through paper-based reading comprehension exercises. It can be **about interacting with a book, creating and sharing a book, enjoying a book in a different format in any place at any time, having a book read to you and learning something new about the world around you.**



Dr. Mohamed Wagialla has published over 2500 Journal articles covering a wide range of Islamic topics. Most of these articles appeared in renowned Arabic Journals and magazines. Mohamed currently lectures at Khalifa University of Science Technology and Research in Sharjah, UAE.



**Dr. Mohamed
Wagialla Ahmed**
Khalifa University
Sharjah

Reading Champion Profile

What memories do you have of reading or being read to when you were a child?

If I can recall well, it was in the 60's when I was a fourth grader. I started reading simple stories in the Arabic language. Then I started reading special pages in the daily papers. I was fascinated a great deal by the heritage of Islamic history. This early reading introduced me to the realm of Islamic civilization and eventually became my major area of interest and study which I am practicing today.

Can you name a book (or books) that you particularly liked when you were younger?

I remember a book that I favoured greatly; it was about the great Arabic poet Abu Al Taieb Al Motanabi.

Another favourite book was by the Egyptian author Ali Al-Jarim and was entitled "The Ambitious Poet".

What do you read with your children? Fortunately my children are better readers than I, since they were born and raised in a country where people love to read books. They were raised naturally in a good environment. One of them can read 14 books in week. I rarely need to read to them, but I enjoy taking them to the public library and book stores to let them select what they like to read.

What do you enjoy reading for yourself?

Currently, I focus on reading material in my area of specialization which is International Relations and Foreign Policies.

How do you find time for reading?

Happily, it's in my profession to read, write and teach. So, I devote most of my time to reading.

How would you encourage students in particular to read?

That's a good question. It is one of my life's ambitions to encourage youngsters to read. I have actually lectured about that and written an article based on my research called "Why don't our children read?"

I encourage children to read and show them that it's an enjoyable activity. I always try to convince them and tell them that there are so many benefits: to expand horizons, and to get real knowledge about what is going on in the world.



Tom Le Seilleur & Nick Moore
Khalifa University, UAE

Photocopiable Teaching Resources

READING CHAMPIONS

At Khalifa University we have developed a reading program for our foundation preparatory students that aims to create a culture of reading, a habit of reading and a pleasure of reading. One of the projects that we have used is called 'Reading Champions'. This is an initiative that has roots in ancient Greece. At that time, athletic champions who trained to be the best in their sport were also expected to be academic leaders who were well-read scholars that the youth would admire.

Modern Reading Champions may include sports stars, local or international stars or celebrities, people from the local community or from the same school, library or university, all of whom want to share their love of reading. You will find a selection of Reading Champions in this issue of READ.

We decided that, in order to engender a positive attitude towards reading, it is vital that the whole of Khalifa University is seen to be reading by our students; hence the introduction of Reading Champions. From security staff to the manager, from maths teachers to catering staff, we are committed to a long-term strategy to cultivate a campus that reads.

Stage One

The teachers in the EFL department completed a Reading Champions profile (similar to the one on page 26), put a photo of themselves on it and laminated it. They still sit proudly on our office doors for all students and staff to see.

Stage Two

A few weeks after our first semester students had begun a

reading for pleasure programme, pairs of students interviewed faculty and staff about their reading habits, using similar questions to those on page 26. One of the students asked the questions and the other made notes. The two students then worked together to compile a Reading Champion profile, having secured a photo of the faculty or staff member. After receiving help in drafting the profile, the students added their names to the profile, showed the faculty member the final version, (typed this time via a computer with the photo), and with their permission laminated it and posted it onto their office door.

Stage Three

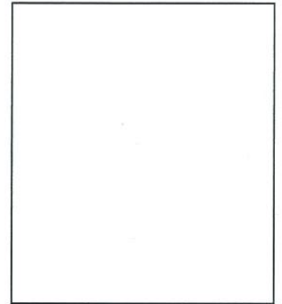
At the end of last semester, students were given an opportunity to change the profile questions to suit their particular circumstance. For example, while faculty members were asked 'What books do/did you read with your children?' many of our students altered this to 'What books do/did you read with your brothers or sisters?' The students completed their own profiles, checked their draft with their EFL teacher, and then shared them with the faculty member they had interviewed.

The questions that we asked are printed on the next page for you to photocopy or adapt and use with staff, faculty, parents, visitors, local celebrities and students. They were inspired by the National Literacy Trust's 'Reading Champions' project. You can find many more related resources at http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/reading_champions.



Reading Champions Profile

What memories do you have of reading or being read to when you were a child?



Can you name a book(s) that you particularly liked when you were younger?

What do you read with your children or your brothers and sisters?

What do you enjoy reading for yourself? What are you reading at the moment?

How do you find time for reading? Where do you like to read?

How would you encourage students to read?

P H O T O C O P I A B L E





Reading Audit

How much do you read?

Please take a moment to help us understand your reading habits. By completing this questionnaire you can help us improve the reading resources we offer you at our institution and to match your needs.

Your Reading Habits

How often do you read?

- Every day
- 4 or 5 times a week
- 3 or fewer times a week
- Never

What do you typically read? (Tick any)

- Fiction Books
- Non – Fiction Books
- E-Books
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Other (Please write here) _____

How do you think you read?

- Excellent
- Generally good
- OK
- Poor

How much do you enjoy reading?

- I love reading
- I like reading
- I read because I need to
- I don't like reading
- I don't read

Reading at Home or School

Who reads at home? (Tick any)

- All my family
- My parents
- My brothers and sisters
- No-one

How many books do you have at home?

- About (say how many) _____
- About 100
- Not many
- None

Where is reading done at school? (Tick any)

- Everywhere
- In the library
- Outside of the classroom
- Only in the classroom

Does your school do enough to promote reading?

- Yes
- No

Additional Comments – If you would like to say something please write below

About You (optional)

Name _____ E-mail _____
City/Country _____

Thank you for your participation.

P H O T O C O P I A B L E

Tom is married to a book lover called Natalie. His sons Tom, Joseph and Sam as well as his daughters Hannah and Grace are all reading heroes. They are all prolific readers of fiction and non-fiction and it is because of their success that Tom wants to inspire the UAE and create a reading culture. He works at Khalifa University and started teaching in 1985 in Beirut. He then went on to teach in the UK, Spain, Saudi Arabia and Libya. Since 2002, he has taught at the Petroleum Institute, British Council, HCT and the UAE Academy.



Tom Le Seilleur
Khalifa University
Sharjah

Photocopiable Teaching Resources READING AUDIT

An audit is a fancy term for a survey, questionnaire or feedback. You can use a reading audit in order to find out what your students read or don't read, what they like or don't like reading, how much time is spent on reading, and where it takes place, as well as finding out about their opinions and their habits at school and home. The audit could easily be adapted and given to parents, young adults, or primary or secondary school children, in the workplace or at a library, school or university, although the questions would need to take into account the age, gender and circumstances of the recipients.

What you do with the results of this simple research tool will depend on your original reasons for carrying it out. Perhaps, as a teacher, you want to know the reading habits of the students you are trying to encourage to read so that you can set realistic targets. Perhaps you want to order new resources, new materials or new reading books, magazines and newspapers so you want to make sure you get the texts students want and would read. You might even be collecting data to guide management, directors, ministers, or governments, or simply to inform students and their parents, so that you can describe trends and habits with confidence.

I have carried out reading audits in a variety of countries and organizations to find out what my students read, how much and how often they read, where they read, and whether there

is a strong reason why they like or dislike reading. The data was used to help design courses and to tailor reading texts based on the likes and dislikes of my students. In the case of the Arabic-speaking countries (Libya, Lebanon, Qatar; KSA and the UAE) the research often confirmed the view that the country needs to develop a culture or habit of reading at school, at home and in society in general. However, the audit also revealed that many students buck this trend. Some students read to their brothers and sisters, some really enjoy reading and some have parents who read to them when they were young.

An example of a brief reading audit for children and young adults is on page 27 for you to photocopy and use. This audit should provide a profile of reading habits and attitudes that a class teacher can use to initiate a reading programme. If you would like to see other questionnaires then please look at the excellent resources of the UK-based website for the National Literacy Trust (NLT). *Reading Connects* is one of many projects in the NLT. Check out the resources pages for reading surveys at http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/projects_networks



Adrian Hayes is the British, UAE based, record-breaking adventurer, speaker, corporate coach and sustainability ambassador. A former British Army Gurkha officer and Airbus Sales Director, he holds a Guinness World record for reaching the Earth's "3 Poles". Adrian is actively involved with many schools in the UAE and UK, providing schools education and awareness programmes with linkages to his expeditions.



Adrian Hayes
Coach, Speaker Adventurer
Dubai

Reading Champion Profile

What memories do you have of reading or being read to when you were a child?

AH - a bit disparate to be honest. My parents were too busy running a hotel 24/7 to read to us most of the time. I liked reading but kept to my favorites - I just didn't enjoy reading other books for reading's sake.

Can you name any books that you particularly liked when you were younger?

AH - Enid Blyton's "Famous Five" series captivated me when I was a young boy, pretty much to the exclusion of everything else. I suppose it was the adventure of the characters in the books which mirrored my own life with my brothers. As I grew older, the other books I pored over were, perhaps unsurprisingly, atlases, books on the World, mountains, adventure. It was the books that started to spawn the dreams.

What do you read with your children?

AH - My kids love to be read to do before bed, though there's a huge difference between a typical girl and boy. My son, Alexander, loves Star Wars and anything militarily; my daughter Charlotte, normal girls books. Both love anything to do with animals.

What do you enjoy reading for yourself?

AH - This may be a controversial view, but given the busy life I (and of course everyone) leads, my philosophy is that if I'm taking precious time to read a book, then I need to learn something at the same time. I haven't read more than 2 novels since I left school. I read biographies, exploration & adventure, books on the World, international affairs and personal development books exclusively. The other things I read are, of course, newspapers. I feel a bit lost without them.

How do you find time for reading for pleasure?

AH - Difficult. I'm not one who can pick up a book for 30 mins every few days - once I start, I'm on a roll and usually read it from front to cover in one go. Most of my reading is on planes or on vacation. And newspapers at breakfast.

How would you encourage others - students in particular - to read?

AH - It's only my take, but given my overwhelming preference for fact versus fiction, I'd always encourage students to read informative books rather than novels - for the same reasons I'd urge students to study subjects that will be of use to them in their lives. The World is a vastly different place than it was even 25 years ago and I don't believe our education systems entirely equip children for that World, though it's slowly changing.

Darcy Harris (MEd TESOL, DELTA) has taught English in Japan, the USA, the UK, Finland, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. She is currently involved in a pilot foundations program between the UAE University and the Higher Colleges of Technology. Darcy coordinates the TESOL Arabia Learner Independence SIG.



Darcy Harris
UAE University
Al Ain

Lead by Example



Recently, I went to a TESOL Arabia event in Ras Al Khaimah. During one of the presentations, a woman was talking about



the research she had done with teachers in the local schools. She had asked them how they taught critical thinking skills. One of the teachers had responded by asking her what critical thinking was. He had never heard of this idea before. How was he supposed to teach something he had never taught or experienced?

We all comment on our student's ability to read. We argue about what kind of reading our students should do – extensive? Intensive? We worry that our students do not read. We tell our students to read more. Sometimes we take them to the ILC or a library and we show them where the books are. We assign book reports, book projects and general reading. We encourage, cajole and even force students to read, and there is nothing wrong with this. However, do we ever stop to consider that our students may not see the need to read?

It has often been said that Gulf Arabs come from an oral tradition. It is likely that our students do not have a lot of reading role models. Chances are our students were not read bedtime stories. They probably did not see parents reading on a leisurely Friday morning. I doubt the family got in the car and went to the public library to hear their favourite book being read or to select reading material they could all share later on at home.

"You travel abroad and you see people reading in cafes, on buses, on trains and in parks. Now of course when we travel these sights surprise us because here in Saudi Arabia, you never see people

reading in public. Books for most Saudis mean textbooks which means study which means unpleasant drudgery."
MISHKHAS, A (2002)

Mishkhas is speaking of Saudi Arabia, but when I look around me, I believe the same can be said of the UAE. For many years now I have been trying to motivate people to read in a very small and simple way. I read publicly. I sit in cafes, restaurants and hospitals. I read my books silently to myself. I do not hide quietly in a corner. I hold the books up so people can see what I am reading. I smile at the people who point at me and laugh. I interact with anyone who approaches me to ask about what I am doing. I make sure that people who take the time to look at the cover of my book get a chance to see it. When I finish a book, I put it down and leave it wherever I am at that moment with the hope that someone will be brave enough to pick it up, read it and keep the cycle of reading going.

I don't just stop at the outside world, I read on campus too. I sometimes sit on the Women's Campus in building 80 with a cup from Starbucks and a good book. I read on my breaks in the classroom when I can. I let the girls ask me questions about my book, but only if they approach me. I smile when they laugh at the fact that I am reading. I let them make negative comments on how boring reading is. I encourage them to read in Arabic, as well as English. Some girls have brought in books they were reading and they share their stories with me. Sometimes we find out that we have both read the same book or that we have similar stories and characters in English. It is motivating to have someone take an interest in what you are doing.

I believe that when I read in public, I put my money where my mouth is. I do not just say read – I read. Does it work? Are more people reading? I do not know, but I would like to share something that happened lately. I spend a lot of time in hospital waiting rooms. This gives me lots of time to read. Recently, an Emirati family was waiting with me. The mother and her 4 year old son were sitting next to me and the father was sitting across from us.

I was reading my book. The young boy was desperately trying to get my attention as young children like to do when they think you do not realize that they are the center of the universe. When he least expected it, I looked over and smiled at him. I went back to my book.

The boy was now curious about what I was doing. He started looking at my book and he began to whisper to his mother. Next to his mother were some waiting room magazines. The boy got up and went over to the magazines. He picked one up and then sat back down next to me. He opened up the magazine and then he leaned over and smiled at me. He didn't seem to mind that the magazine was upside down. He just wanted me to see that he could read too.

His mother whispered in his ear and he righted his magazine. Suddenly, he decided the magazine was not for him so he put it on the chair next to where his father had been sitting, and went back to the table. This time he looked at the magazines more carefully and he found a comic book. He climbed back into his chair and he began to look at the comic. He quickly forgot about me and started to look at the pictures. Then he leaned over to his mother and began asking her questions about the pictures. They had a conversation about the story.

When his father reappeared and sat down he looked over at his son. He saw what he was looking at and asked the boy what he was doing. The son showed him the magazine and then proceeded to tell him about it. Both parents appeared to be terribly proud that their son was reading and the son was excited by the attention he was getting. In my heart, I knew a reader was born!

After awhile, the son settled down and went back to looking at the comic. The father looked over and saw me reading, saw his son reading and glanced down at the magazine next to him. To my amazement, he picked up the magazine and started reading it. In my 16 years in the Gulf, I cannot remember a single moment when the majority of people in a public place were reading!

"I was further shocked by a recent Lebanese newspaper report that Arabs read an average of seven minutes in a year. There is no mistake — this is not a daily, weekly or monthly average but the time spent reading in one full year. Not all of them could possibly

be suffering from dyslexia which afflicts only 4 to 10 percent in any society. The problem is further worsened by 65 million illiterate women in the Arab world. What is the excuse for such ignorance and illiteracy among a people whose first revealed religious command was 'Read'?" AL-HUWEIDAH, W. (2002)

Slowly, things are changing in the UAE. The Abu Dhabi Cultural and Heritage group (ADACH) has established Kalima, a non-profit initiative that is translating literary, intellectual and scientific works into Arabic and then publishing and distributing them. Sharjah is attempting to give every Emirati family in Sharjah a home library of 50 books and Dubai has started the Sheikh Mohammed book award ensuring that schools in Dubai receive proper libraries. However, if nobody is reading, what is the point of having books?

"There is a lack of reading 'habit' in both L1 and target language (TL) for a majority of our learners. Many students appear deficient in terms of their 'Global Awareness'. There is the negative influence of students' prior learning at school and exam backwash on perceptions of reading & reading strategies. The perception of English reading's sole purpose for many learners is for use in a purely functional, highly defined academic context. Poor reading skills have implications for students' other subjects." O'Sullivan (2004)

With so much negativity towards reading is it hopeless? I don't think so. Our students are waiting to embrace reading. They just need a little encouragement. In his book, *The Tipping Point*, Gladwell talks about social viruses. Ideas and actions are contagious. Little things can make a big difference. I may be one person, but if you start reading publicly along with me, we just might set off an epidemic of reading. Start reading publicly! Give the local population reading role models! Join the TESOL Arabia Reading SIG today and become a reading champion. Contact Tom Le Seelleur (readingchampionsuae@Yahoo.co.uk) for more information. Together we can make a difference.

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N.B. This article was previously published in the UGRU Newsletter Spring 2010

Susan O'Neill has been working as part of the Madaras Al Ghad program for 4 years. Prior to this she was a teacher at Scots College in Sydney Australia. In her current position as Teacher Developmental Specialist at Al Saada school, Dubai she has been fortunate enough to take part in and support the reading initiatives set up by the current learning co-ordinator Mrs Sarah Perry and the school principal Mrs Hind Lootah. Mrs Heba Omar who has been at the school since the program ran has also worked tirelessly at creating reading opportunities for the girls at the school.



Susan O'Neill
Al Saada School
Dubai

Learn to READ... Read to LEARN

Al Saada School for girls is a learning community that aims to develop and enrich the reading skills of all of its students. Through the implementation of strategies that embrace and nurture the interests of its pupils, the school promotes reading as a joyous, fun and engaging activity.

Reading Environment

Classrooms immerse students in a print rich environment where rooms display visuals, word walls, calendar routines, curriculum specific themes and a designated area for reading. This space is known as the reading corner and is established as a place for students to freely choose a book in English or Arabic that they may enjoy. Big Books are often selected from here and read by the teacher as a whole class activity. The learning center is another space within the school where teachers enrich their literacy program. Using computers, realia and a small theatre, students are able to engage with a story at a more meaningful level. Our Grade 4 students recently performed a class poem they were studying called "More Friends More Fun."

Reading Bags

Every student has a red reading bag they carry with them each day. Girls exchange their reading books on a daily basis and keep a reading journal. Several times in the school year a Reading Challenge is held and each grade level is encouraged to read as many books as they can.

Partner Reading

Early morning classes are held by teachers who work tirelessly to ensure every student experiences the gift of reading. One of

the most effective strategies I have seen used during this time is partner reading. In this time students that are more fluent in their reading practice sit with a less confident peer and read with them. The activity reinforces skills for both students and creates a non threatening environment for all pupils to learn in.

Spelling Bee, Who Wants to be a Millionaire

The school holds several initiatives aimed at encouraging the girls to read more on Curriculum related topics. Spelling Bees and Game shows are held throughout the year with each competition creating great interest and achieving its desired effect ...learning to read and learning through reading in a fun and enjoyable way.

Reading Month

Reading month is an initiative of the schools learning coordinator, Ms Sarah People-Perry. This month brings together many daily and classroom reading activities. During this time a special reading pledge is recited during assembly time; guests are invited to read to students; different authors are studied and time is taken during the day to "Drop everything and read." Teachers and students alike enjoy this practice as they come together as one community to celebrate the joys of reading.

Through the establishment of daily reading routines to activities such as Spelling Bees and Reading challenges, Al Saada demonstrates how consistency, creativity, loyalty and dedication can bring about an awareness in parents, children and staff that reading is so... so... so much more than the routine decoding of letters on a page.



Oxford Read and Discover

Learn more about the world ... in English

LEVELS 1 AND 2 FORTHCOMING

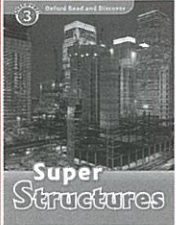
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THE NATURAL WORLD

THE WORLD OF ARTS AND SOCIAL STUDIES

LEVEL 3



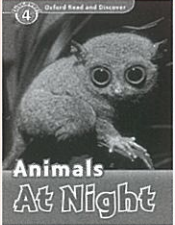
600 Headwords

How We Make Products
Sound and Music
Super Structures
Your Five Senses

Amazing Minibeasts
Animals in the Air
Life in Rainforests
Wonderful Water

Festivals Around the World
Free Time Around the World

LEVEL 4



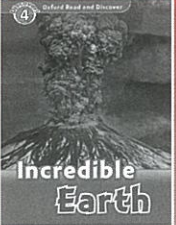
750 Headwords

All About Plants
How to Stay Healthy
Machines Then and Now
Why We Recycle

All About Desert Life
All About Ocean Life
Animals at Night
Incredible Earth

Animals in Art
Wonders of the Past

LEVEL 5



900 Headwords

Materials to Products
Medicine Then and Now
Transportation Then and Now
Wild Weather

All About Islands
Animal Life Cycles
Exploring Our World
Great Migrations

Homes Around the World
Our World in Art

LEVEL 6



1050 Headwords

Cells and Microbes
Clothes Then and Now
Incredible Energy
Your Amazing Body

All About Space
Caring for Our Planet
Earth Then and Now
Wonderful Ecosystems


Helping Around the World
Food Around the World

Motivate your students with these exciting new non-fiction graded readers.

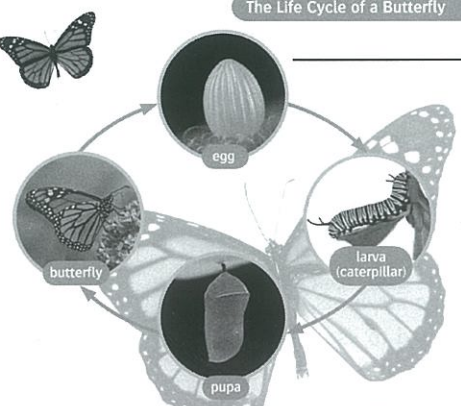
5 Baby Minibeasts

Most baby minibeasts come from eggs. Some minibeasts, like slugs and earthworms, lay their eggs in soil. Other minibeasts, like butterflies and beetles, lay their eggs on plants. Scorpions don't lay eggs. They have live babies. The baby scorpions travel on their mother's back.

A Female Scorpion and Babies



The Life Cycle of a Butterfly



Go to pages 32-33 for activities.

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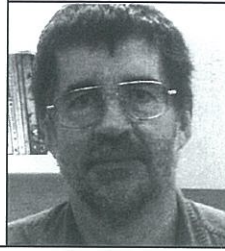
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Nick Bullard is Publishing Manager at Oxford University Press, where among other areas of publishing he is responsible for Graded Readers. He has been involved in *Extensive Reading* for nearly twenty years, and has conducted training sessions and seminars worldwide.



Nick Bullard
Oxford University Press
United Kingdom

Reading, cultural appropriacy, and motivation

In the 1930s, three young Australian aboriginal girls are removed from their families in the desert and taken to an orphanage 2000 kilometres away. They escape twice, and on their second attempt walk all the way home, through some of the harshest terrain in the world.

In Victorian London, a young man with a serious disfiguring condition (probably a form of Proteus Syndrome) is rescued by a doctor. He becomes something of a celebrity, before his premature death at the age of twenty-seven.

A young man discovers that his father, on a trip to Dubai, has been framed for a crime that he did not commit. With the help of a young woman, who, for cultural reasons, he is unable to meet face to face, he is able to flush out the real criminal.

In seventeenth century New England, a woman is accused of adultery and publically humiliated. She struggles with the prejudices of the society in which she lives, bringing up her daughter alone.

In 1976 the apartheid system is still in operation in South Africa. A young white journalist begins an investigation into the death of a black activist. The police do everything possible to block the investigation, including attempts to harass his family. The journalist is finally forced to escape across the border to Lesotho.

What is the common feature to these five stories, some true, some fictional, set at different times in different continents?

Simply, they have all been extremely popular as graded readers. You might expect a book to be more popular in the region in which it is set, but this is not necessarily the case. Indeed, when one examines where the books described above are most popular, there are quite a few surprises.

The first of the books above (*Rabbit-Proof Fence* by Doris Pilkington Garimara) is most popular in Iran and Taiwan. The second (*The Elephant Man* by Tim Vicary), shows up as a bestseller in Japan and South Korea. The third (*The Drive to Dubai* by Julie Till), is popular in Turkey and Kazakhstan, while the fourth (*The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne), is a star in Hungary and Brazil. The fifth (*Cry Freedom* by John Briley), sells best in Spain, Switzerland, and Thailand.

It should be no surprise that students are happy to read stories that are culturally far removed from their own realities. After all, the main readership of the Harry Potter series is not composed of wizards, and few readers of the Twilight saga have ever met a vampire. You don't have to be an Australian Aborigine to empathize with the challenges – both mental and physical – of the three girls whose story is told in *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. We don't have to be disfigured ourselves to understand the difficulties of the protagonist in *The Elephant Man*, although reading about them may open our eyes to our own prejudices as well as those of the world at large.

You might think, then, that a publisher of graded readers doesn't need to consider the geographic and temporal location

of their stories. If the stories are good, the conclusion might be, then anybody, anywhere, will read them. However, it's not quite as simple as that, for a couple of key reasons.

Firstly, many students encountering readers in their English class may be actually reading a book – in any language – for the first time. Just the act of reading a book is a huge cultural experiment, and we need to ensure that the gulf is not too great.

Secondly, many students come from cultures that feel beleaguered, even under attack, by Western media. And the book that they read may be seen as a representative of that culture. Indeed, it's significant that *none* of the protagonists in the hugely popular stories above are representative of mainstream Western culture. They are people on the margins, and many of our students feel the same way about themselves.

These two reasons make it imperative that publishers provide reading material that is rooted in the students' own culture. Students who are already dealing with the unfamiliar act of reading should not have to negotiate cultural unfamiliarity; even strange names can be a block. And we should avoid their having to encounter issues that are an affront to their own culture. Of course they need to deal with cultural unfamiliarity and affront, but their exposure to this is best staged. We also need to bear in mind that, for many, the objective in learning English is instrumental. They want to operate in English and within an English-speaking environment, but that does not mean they want to become part of that environment. As a French student said to me many years ago; 'I need to work with Americans, but that doesn't mean I have to eat at McDonald's'.

At Oxford University Press we have thought long and hard about these problems. We wanted to publish materials that would be culturally more accessible to students in the Arab world. However, we felt it important that we shouldn't publish only for that world. Anything we published would have to be of interest globally.

We found ourselves exploring three strands of story. We began exploring the wealth of folktale that underlies much of the literature in the region. This led us towards a retelling of the story of Sinbad, together with a number of other stories aimed at younger learners. However, we've also become aware over the years that true stories are extremely popular with learners, so we started looking at some of the great historic figures of the Arab world. This led us to Saladin and Ibn Battuta, both names that are known in the West but not as well known as they should

be. There was an Italian, Marco Polo, who travelled a bit in the 13th century, but nowhere near as far as Ibn Battuta perhaps 50 years later. And Saladin, as well as being a master of military strategy was a successful ruler; and a much more attractive figure than most of his opponents. Published recently, *Saladin* is proving extremely popular well beyond the Arab world.

Historic figures are of interest to many, but our students live in the present, which is where contemporary titles like *The Drive to Dubai* and *Mystery in Muscat* have a role. Here, with mystery stories set in a familiar environment, students can focus on understanding – and following – the story, thereby developing their reading skills. A fascinating and unique culture is emerging in the Gulf region and it's not surprising that others are interested in it. Students learning English in Thailand, Spain and Brazil are all reading mysteries set in the Gulf, and perhaps learning something about its culture. These are not stories especially constructed for a Gulf readership. They are stories for the world which happen to be set in the Gulf.

We need also to be aware that reading may not be enough for some students. It's important to many students' motivation that they demonstrate that they have read, perhaps to their teacher or perhaps simply to themselves. It's vital that activities are provided to support and validate the reading, and using a MultiROM (a combination of audio CD and CD-ROM) packaged with the reader, offers students this opportunity. Students can listen to a dramatized reading of the entire story. This both helps with pronunciation and improves listening skills. They can also perform a number of interactive tasks to sustain their reading. The activities are organized in sections, so that as the student reads through the book, he or she can carry out the appropriate tasks after each couple of chapters. Our experience is that students who have little reading experience benefit from this ongoing support and it should encourage them towards a more autonomous approach to reading as they progress.

If you are selecting graded readers for your students (and you should be, for the benefits are significant), take care to consider the culture. Expose your students to other cultures, by all means, but give them the chance to explore their own as well. And ensure that there are sufficient activities to sustain the students alongside their reading.



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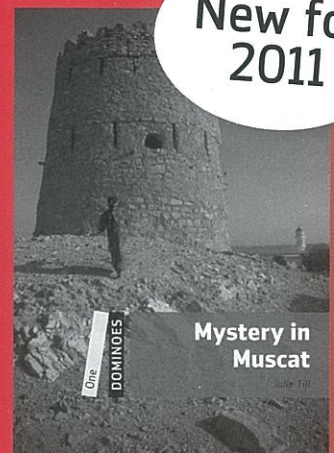
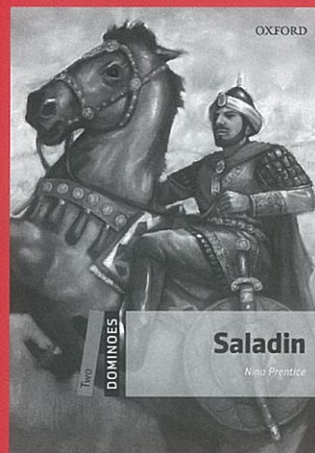
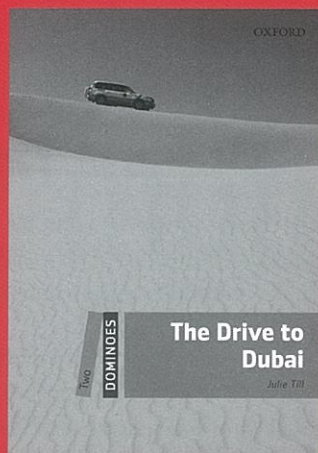
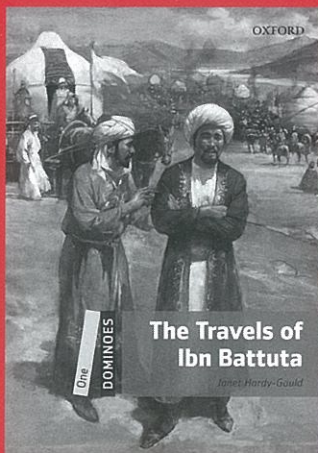
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Isobel Aboulhoul is the co-founder and director of the Magrudy's chain of bookshops and established Jerboa book publishers. She also instigated the Emirates Airlines International Festival of Literature (EAIFL). She was given the Cultural Personality Award in 2011 by His Highness Dr Shaikh Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah.



Isobelle Aboulhoul
Magrudy's & EAIFL
Dubai

Reading Champion

What memories do you have of reading or being read to when you were a child?

I have wonderful memories of being read to every night. It was something I so looked forward to as a child. My mother would read to my brother and I in the afternoons, but my father was the one who read to each of us at bedtime. He had a wonderful reading voice, he loved poetry and it was his voice gently rising and falling that I remember as I melted into dreamland each night.

*The first book I can remember reading on my own was *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. I crossed through that magic door forgetting that there were words on the page because I was so caught up in the adventure.*

Can you name a book(s) that you particularly liked when you were younger?

*Where to start? I loved every Enid Blyton book I could lay my hands on, particularly *The Famous Five* series. Books that I remember with so much enjoyment are *Black Beauty*, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *Kildee House*, *Eagle of the Ninth*.*

What do you read with your children?

My youngest is now at University, but we still swap and share books. I read my children all the books I had enjoyed as a

*child, plus all the Roald Dahl books, a particular favourite was *Danny Champion of The World*. My youngest loved *Holes* by Louis Sachar, and my oldest was very taken with all of *Little House on the Prairie* series, and *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck. My son was incredibly moved by *Watership Down*. Strangely each of my five children has very individual tastes in reading, deciding early on who were their favourite authors.*

What do you enjoy reading for yourself?

Given a choice I would select literary fiction.

*I find great comfort in 20th Century Classics and will often return to a much loved book for a great and inspiring read. I try and read as many fiction prize winners as I can; I can't say I enjoy them all, but I find it interesting to see if I can decide why the judges may have picked this book as a winner. The Booker shortlist is always an amazing and surprising selection of books. This year I managed to read them all. I disagreed with the judges choice of the winner "*The Finkler Question*" and thought that "*Room*" should have won.*

What are you reading at the moment?

I am reading an historical account of

*the Levant. It is a dense book full of interesting and quirky facts. It paints a very different picture of societies living side by side and in many ways, a more enlightened time than today. I am also reading *Lyrics Alley* by Laila Abouleila, a saga set in Sudan, but with much historical fact intertwined. I have just finished and love a doorstep of a book "*Distant Hours*" by Kate Morten.*

How do you find time for reading?

Luckily I am addicted to books, so it is no problem to find time to read. However, it can be difficult to find time to work!

How would you encourage students in particular to read?

Every person has a key, and it is finding the right key, the book the subject the tone that will mean the reader cannot put the book down. It is a different book for different people. Readers talk about books being page turners or unputdownable. That is true.

*Books like *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, *Room*, *The Good Earth*, *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, *The Kite Runner* are all books that I think would help students develop a love of reading.*

Give them a quiet space and time and a good book. They'll soon be hooked.

Khalifa University Reading Champions

	What memories do you have of reading or being read to when you were a child?	What do you enjoy reading for yourself?	How do you find time for reading for pleasure?	How do you encourage students or your children to read?
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 2px;">GILL KNIGHT</p> 	<p>My mother and grandmother read or told me stories as a small child and I always had a bedtime story. Going to the library and selecting new books was a weekly outing - everyone used the library. I remember reading a lot of poetry at primary school. The tree house was my favourite place to read.</p>	<p>I particularly enjoy books that are set in foreign countries and give an insight into the life and social history of a place/period.</p>	<p>I read the newspaper every day and I try to read a British Sunday paper every week. I normally have two books on the go at one time, so what I choose to read depends on mood & the spare time I have.</p>	<p>Remove the remote control!</p>
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 2px;">TOM LE SEELLEUR</p> 	<p>When I was younger I used to read a lot of non-fiction ladybird books. I liked reading about countries, as my parents lived in Caracas o Turkey. My mum and dad read to me when I was little. My mum had housework and a part time job in a hospital theatre and seven of us.</p>	<p>I normally read The Times and the Gulf News or the National. I love books about the Royal Navy. I also love reading to my kids - Grace loves fairy tales, Hannah loves adventure.</p>	<p>You just have to fit it in. After the kids are in bed and the house is quiet then I get an hour or more. The park at weekends, in the passenger seat, on holiday anywhere. I love reading.</p>	<p>The important factor in encouraging reading is to find books that target the interests of young people and capture their imagination. Throw away the video game, turn off the computer, find a nice place to sit or lie and read.</p>
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 2px;">NICK MOORE</p> 	<p>I know my parents read to me from a very early age. I was very eager to learn to read. My older brother was already reading and I couldn't wait to catch up. I was already a reading champion when I was 6. As soon as my younger brother was old enough to listen, I read to him.</p>	<p>I enjoy detective stories by Ian Rankin, comedies by Ben Elton and novels by Umberto Eco. My favourite novelist writing in English is Peter Carey, whose <i>Illywhacker</i> may be my favourite novel.</p>	<p>Most novels I read over the summer or on long trips. I spend time during the year reading fact rather than fiction. How do you find time for life without reading?</p>	<p>Find something that interests you and share. I use www.goodreads.com, which is like a Facebook for books.</p>
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 2px;">PHYLLIS BURNS</p> 	<p>Going to the local library each week with my mum and choosing 2 books which I then read in bed with a torch when it was time for 'lights out'</p>	<p>It is hard to beat the modern Irish writers. However some of the best (and funniest) short stories I have ever read were in 'Dubai Tales' by Mohammed Al Murr.</p>	<p>I read each night in bed before falling asleep. My idea of a dream holiday is one where I can have peace and quiet and read a book a day.</p>	<p>It was difficult to get my son Calum to read. I started him on something easy which was also a lot of fun - anything by Roald Dahl fits that bill. There is such a wealth of literature that you can always find a book which matches a person's interests.</p>
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 2px;">VAL MORAN</p> 	<p>I began reading comics from when I was about 5. My favourite was 'The Beano'. I remember going to the library from a very early age. I loved the smell of going into the library. Even to this day my favourite place to visit while shopping is a book shop.</p>	<p>I am addicted to reading modern novels about real-life problems and concerns. I also love biographies & non-fiction and I read 'The Times' newspaper every day.</p>	<p>I always find time to read in my special reading chair when the kids have gone to bed and it is nice and quiet. I also make sure that everywhere I go I bring a book with me so I can always read.</p>	<p>People of both sexes need to discover the joy of reading and how it is a way to happiness and fulfillment</p>



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Alye Caspary has been an elementary teacher in Statham, Georgia, for the past eight years. She has worked with English Language Learners as well as special education students, presented at TESOL conferences and has a Master of Science in Education degree with a focus on elementary reading and literacy from Walden University.



Alye Caspary
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Reader's Theatre

Reader's Theatre is a practical application for the English Language Learner (ELL) that is realizing highly successful results when applied strategically to students of all ages. The purpose of Reader's Theatre is to introduce English Language Learners to authentic literature, teach comprehension strategies, and increase fluency. Reader's Theatre will help students understand how to read books at increasing levels of difficulty, and strengthen motivation and confidence. Reader's Theatre is appropriate for students of all ages who are learning a new language and holds positive implications for ELL educators. There are numerous resource books available containing plays and readings for each grade level, content area, or genre. Free resources are available on the internet, as well as suggested methods for Reader's Theatre activities. ELL teachers can also create their own plays from the stories that their students are reading, and more advanced students can incorporate writing strategies in order to write and perform their own plays.

Reader's Theatre is an excellent group activity that encourages ELL student to become involved in their reading and strengthens creativity. Students can make props or dress up to perform in front of peers. Comprehension strategies are modeled and practiced before, during, and after reading, and emphasis is placed on decoding text in a smooth and accurate manner with appropriate pronunciation. Reader's Theatre results in an increase in the fluency attributes of expression, volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace, as well as enthusiasm toward reading as students perform for a group of their peers to showcase their hard work.

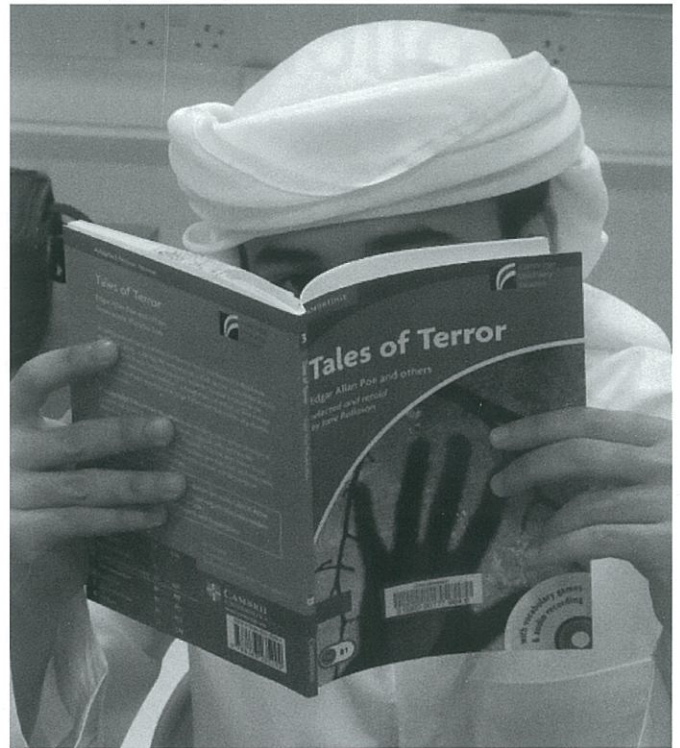
Third grade students in Statham Elementary School, Georgia, USA, engaged in Reader's Theatre activities for thirty minutes a day for a three week period. During this time, emphasis was placed on comprehension and fluency. This is a critical component for understanding written text and is a key part of any balanced literacy and English Language Learning program. Students are taught not only to



read and pronounce words correctly but to develop control over surface-level text processing in order to focus on understanding the deeper meaning embedded in the text. ELL students need to be able to read with expression and appropriate volume, to understand punctuation and to read in phrases. They should read smoothly at a proper conversational pace. The advantage of Reader's Theatre is that it offers an excellent opportunity for ELL students, especially struggling readers, to practice repeated readings in a fun and motivational atmosphere.

From an academic perspective, data was collected that showed evidence of the success of Reader's Theatre on reading fluency and student motivation. The Developmental Reading Assessment; a fluency passage, and Rasinski's Multidimensional Fluency Scale Rubric all resulted in positive gains in reading rate, fluency attributes, and instructional reading level. The data analyses also received increased motivation and confidence levels toward reading after participating in three weeks of Reader's Theatre activities. Students consistently respond favorably and ask for additional time on this activity. The third grade students commented that Reader's Theatre "made reading fun" and it was also purposeful and gave them the practice that they needed to feel more confident and develop better pronunciation. Reader's Theatre activities are encouraged as part of a balanced literacy program.

This suggests that Reader's Theatre can be a beneficial way of teaching reading by engaging ELL students in repeated reading using teacher modeling to teach the attributes of expression, pronunciation, phrasing, volume, smoothness, and pace. The experience of reading the scripts and the interactive quality of the activities will engage, motivate, and challenge ELL students to excel. Given at the appropriate reading level and with teacher modeling and direct instruction of the fluency attributes, Reader's Theatre will help to boost confidence levels in struggling learners and increase their motivation toward reading. Try it with your class and it will prove inspirational!



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Judy Wren, originally from Mississippi, USA, began her career as a Peace Corps Volunteer in China. From there she went on to teach in the US and Turkey, receiving her MATL in TESOL and Cambridge DELTA. She currently reads *Time Out Dubai* with the gentlemen of Zayed University's Men Program.



Judy Wren
Zayed University
Dubai

Unintended Consequences of Sustained Silent Reading or SSR

As a language teacher, I had heard about the wonders of getting students to read self-selected materials silently for 20 minutes everyday—developing the ‘reading habit’, building vocabulary, improving reading speed and internalizing grammar—but had never put the theory into practice. Something always got in the way. Students didn’t bring their books. There was a test. I didn’t want to ‘waste’ time. I didn’t think students would take it seriously... The excuses went on and on.

Then I got a new job; new students, new city, new teaching habits. On my very first day in class, I announced that we would be spending the first 20 minutes of every class reading silently. The students should bring a book, magazine or newspaper to class everyday—their choice—but if they didn’t show up with something to read, I would be making the choice for them. The next day all but two students had something to read (those two got ‘Information for IELTS candidates’) so we started reading. And we kept reading—all of us—for a full 20 minutes. And we kept doing it everyday. And before long, I didn’t have to say anything at the beginning of class. Everyone just started reading. And then I discovered, there was a lot more to this SSR than I had been lead to believe.

My top 5 unintended consequences of SSR in my classes:

1. Silence. Glorious silence. Like most teachers, I tend to find a silent classroom uncomfortable, as though learning

isn’t happening if someone (usually me!) isn’t talking. But since ‘silent’ is in the name, there wasn’t much choice but to shut up and let the kids read. It was magical. We are all so accustomed to constant input from our wired lives that to simply sit in a quiet place for a few moments everyday was so refreshing. Not only that, all this silent reading and silent students right at the start of the day lead to...

2. Really well behaved students (for the first 30 minutes at least). Typically when a class starts, everyone is talking and joking or frantically trying to copy their friend’s homework. Sure, that was still the tableau greeting me each morning, but as soon as I said, ‘Let’s start reading,’ an unearthly silence took over the classroom, and all that chaos seemed to disappear. Maybe the students were just staring at the Chanel ad, but something about the quiet room cleared their minds. It was almost like group meditation. A class that started as a group noisy of teenagers was transformed into a group of students, ready to get down to the business of learning some English.

3. Reading *Vogue*. One of the tenants of SSR is that the teacher is a model reader. At first I thought, ‘I read all the time! I don’t need to use that time to catch up on *Vogue*, I need that time to catch up on teaching!’ But I am a slave to protocol and so read I did. What I found was that I did need to catch up on *Vogue*...and *Time Out*...and *Hello!*. After a while, my students were bringing me fashion magazines to read as well and I was loving it. They were discovering that


they could pick up a magazine off the shelf and follow the articles, (which was a major revelation for many of them), and I was discovering time in my busy schedule to read about the latest trends in shoes.

4. Library Field Trips. A big excuse for not starting SSR is that students won't bring their books, and with my newest class this turned out to be the case. It got so that I had two choices: abandon SSR or take the class to the library. I was hesitant, but I went with option number two. It was fantastic! I got to see a whole different side of my students and got great insight into their hobbies and interests. I found that one of my students is a huge *Mr. Bean* fan; how great is that? Another really likes audio books and listens to them on his long commute to class. I also had the opportunity to connect with my students by suggesting titles I thought they would enjoy. It really showed them that I know them as unique individuals. We're going back this week.

5. Routines. Finally, with SSR I always know how my teaching day will start. It's the easiest 20 minutes of planning I do. That sounds lazy, but it's not. Teaching an integrated skills, EAP, 20-hour-a-week intensive English class does not lend itself to many routines. There's just too much vying for our time and attention. With SSR though I have found a routine that we can maintain and that's comforting for me and my students. The rest of the day may be hectic and unpredictable but I know that when I walk into my class, we are all going to pull out books and magazines and sit and read and it's going to clear my mind and help me focus on what I need to do for the next four hours. Who would've thought?



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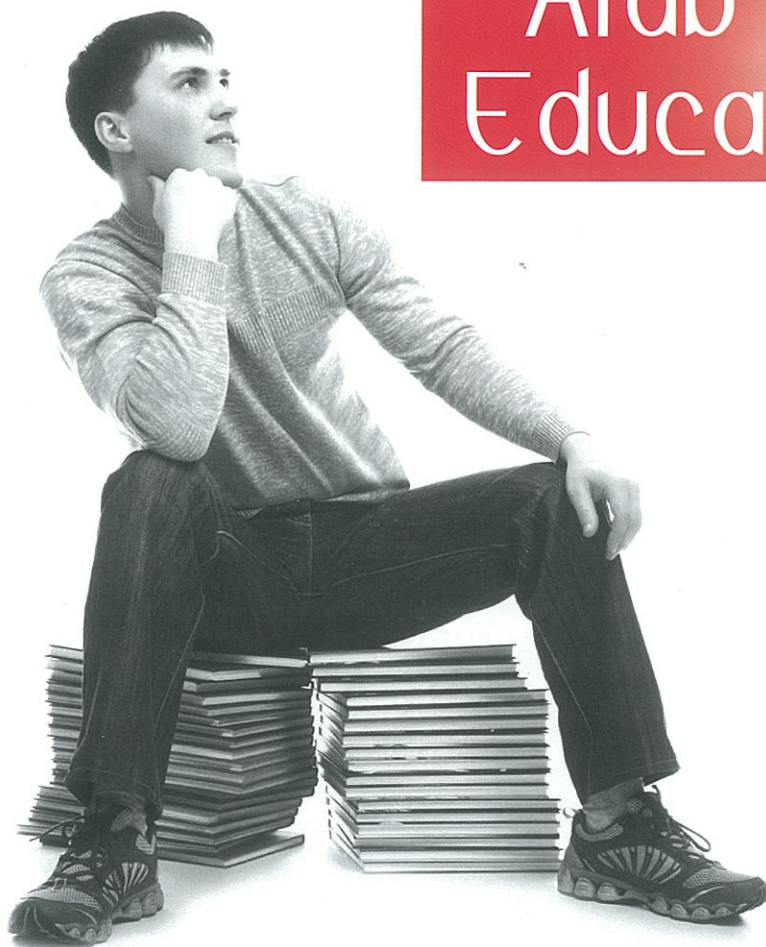


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Amy Jo Dowd is an Education Research Advisor for 'Save the Children.' To find out more you can contact her at adowd@savethechildren.org



Amy Jo Dowd
Save the Children
Dubai

Literacy Boost

Potentially replicable, scalable approach

Problem Statement

Learning to read is a key skill affecting children's ability to pursue further education and/or work opportunities requiring even basic literacy. Developing countries are achieving good progress toward MDG3*, but they and international agencies are recognizing that gains in access to schooling (enrolment) alone will not build the human resource base needed for economic development in the 21st century. More children go to school, increasing numbers reach grade 5, but do they learn?

Preliminary reading assessment results in developing countries worldwide and in Save the Children's Haiti, Malawi, Guatemala, Nepal, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh Country Offices indicate that many children are struggling to learn to read—even in classrooms that are child friendly and implement the active teaching and learning methods that Save the Children endorses. The results of these assessments are a call to action. Save the Children has moved from assessment to design and field test of teacher training interventions alongside community interventions to ensure that every child in Save the Children's basic education programs can learn to read in a child friendly environment. Interventions will support children's reading in school and at home and, if available, foster pre-literacy in early-childhood settings.

Context

Despite the international education community's promotion of active teaching and learning methods in recent decades, and massive training of teachers around the world, many state systems are still struggling to ensure that children learn basic skills while in school. Specifically, most of the more than 3.2 million children in basic education programs the Save the Children supports (2007) appear in need of improved reading instruction. Four of the seven countries for which we have data – Guatemala, Uganda, Haiti, and Nepal - are affected by conflict, and improving educational quality in these settings is a special commitment under our Rewrite the Future initiative. However, the issue extends to Ethiopia, Malawi and other sites as well. Approaches to boost literacy have begun in Haiti, Malawi, Nepal, and Mozambique, and similar activities are being planned in Mali, Ethiopia, Uganda, Pakistan and South Sudan to reach millions of children in remote rural, pastoralist, and/or bilingual communities.

Building the evidence base

In 2008, Save the Children assessed reading and the conditions

and investments that support it in Guatemala, Nepal and Ethiopia; and conducted a reading assessment validation study in Bangladesh. To complement this analysis and enable staff on the ground to respond to the findings programmatically, the DECD team developed the Literacy Boost Toolkit to provide teachers, family members, and the broader community with effective strategies to ensure children acquire relevant reading (and writing) skills in the early grades of primary school.

Literacy Boost Toolkit

The Literacy Boost toolkit works from our existing strengths in teacher training and Reading for Children. It has three components:

1. The reading assessment component provides guideline for the development, piloting and utilization of a program-focused early grades reading assessment in Literacy Boost sites.
2. The teacher training component has 8 sessions that highlight formative assessment and our 5 target reading skills in a monthly process of training, action, support and reflection.
3. The community action component has a module on materials creation, a module on raising awareness via 5 parent education sessions, and a module delineating 6 activities for community members to read more together.

The toolkit components are designed to meld into existing sponsorship programming and we are testing this proposition in our initial pilot sites: Malawi, Nepal and Mali. Literacy Boost's implementation also builds upon the findings of the school effectiveness case studies noted above, using that data to target and shape the interventions. As we learn more about the reading of children in schools we support, we will innovate, shifting our basic education investments and interventions to boost students' reading skills and place them on a path for enhanced learning outcomes for life.

Literacy Boost countries involved now include: Haiti, Malawi, Nepal, Mali, Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique, and Pakistan.

* Millenium Development Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women. Target 3a: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.



Karen Ryan is the British Council English Projects Manager for the UAE. She manages a variety of ELT projects that include teacher and trainer training, and ELT events such as conferences, regional seminars and summer schools. She has previously worked as a teacher and academic manager for the British Council in Egypt, Thailand, the UAE and Japan.



Karen Ryan
British Council
UAE

Space Hop: **British Council** extensive reading project for **Dubai** schoolchildren

The Space Hop Reading Challenge is a British Council grant-funded project which is taking place in partnership with KHDA in ten Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 government schools in Dubai throughout the 2010-11 school year. The project promotes an extensive reading approach with the aims of developing children's love of reading and building their self-confidence as readers.

The idea of the project is very simple. Children are encouraged to read six or more books of their choice over a one month period. When they join the challenge, they are given a membership card and a poster to complete and, as they read, they collect themed incentives and rewards. At the end of the challenge, every participating child receives a certificate, and those that complete the six-book challenge also receive a medal.

The model for the UAE project is a UK called *The Summer Reading Challenge*, which takes place annually in local libraries. This project was set up 12 years ago by The Reading Agency, an independent charity whose mission is to "inspire more people to read more". The challenge has a different theme every year and continues to grow in popularity. The British Council runs the programme in other countries and this year a total of twenty four countries are taking part, including the UAE and Qatar.

This year's Reading Challenge is called 'Space Hop.' Not

surprisingly it is based on the theme of space. The UAE challenge consists of two book collections from UK children's publishers, one for younger and one for older children. These collections of fiction and non-fiction titles were selected for the quality of the writing, the illustrations and their appeal to children. Accompanying the collections are wall charts, posters, display bins and other resources which help to create a space-themed area in a school library or classroom.

A launch event held in October 2010 was attended by school principals, librarians, English teachers and coordinators from the ten participating schools. Our guest speaker Robert Hill, well-known author and series advisor for Black Cat Publishing, gave a presentation on the rationale and benefits of extensive reading which was well summed up in the words of Stephen Krashen; "When children read for pleasure, when they get "hooked on books," they acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called "language skills" many people are so concerned about ... Although free voluntary reading alone will not ensure attainment of the highest levels of literacy, it will at least ensure an acceptable level. Without it, I suspect that children simply do not have a chance." (2004)

Robert highlighted many other benefits of extensive reading. These include a greater enjoyment of, and more positive attitude towards, reading, both of which increase our

students' likelihood of developing the reading habit and will promote autonomous learning. In turn this will help to develop student's self-confidence and increase their world knowledge. The launch also included a teacher training workshop which stressed the importance of allowing children to choose what they read so that children would see reading as its own reward. We also emphasised that the teacher is a role model, and accordingly must also be a reader and participate along with the students.

What surprised the teachers most was that there should be no tests, no exercises, no questions and no dictionaries. They wanted to know how they could ensure that the children had really read the book. The answer was that they wouldn't know and that perhaps this shouldn't matter too much. It was suggested that the teachers could ask the children why they liked or didn't like the book, what it was about, or the children could respond to the books and share their feelings, perhaps by putting ratings on their membership card, if they choose to, but that this should be kept very informal. At the end of the launch each school took away teaching suggestions, guidance for running the challenge, and activity sheets such as space-themed word searches and book review templates. Schools were given leaflets for distribution to parents to explain the project and provide practical tips for helping to engage their children in reading books at home.

We are now three months into the project and so far two cycle 1 schools and one cycle 2 school have completed the Reading Challenge. The three schools approached the challenge in slightly different ways.

At Salma Al Ansareya Girls School, the Grade 5 teacher gave the children 15 minutes quiet reading in the library every morning plus two full lessons every week. They organised various events around the challenge such as a storytelling session with a visiting author, student presentations, and encouraging parents to send in feedback and comments. By the end of the month all 53 girls had completed six or more books and this was celebrated at a certificate ceremony attended by the school principal. The school is now aiming to continue the initiative by purchasing more themed book collections, both in English and in Arabic, throughout the year on topics that interest the children.

At Al Ansareya Boys School, the teachers and librarians

organised a launch event with a treasure hunt which was successful in creating interest, and at Zayed Bin Sultan Boy's School, the grade 5 teacher set up a reading corner in the English classroom and a lending system so that the boys could take the books home overnight and at the weekend. The Head of the English Department, Kholoud Al Mulla, said that even boys with reading difficulties had enjoyed the challenge, improved their reading speed and learnt new vocabulary. She said "Students seemed a bit disappointed when the journey into space had reached the end; as one of the students commented, 'So, we're back to earth then!'"

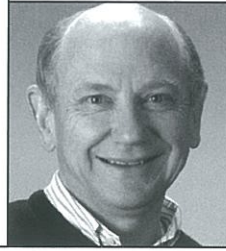


This final comment serves to highlight the fact that this particular reading project has provided only a short-term boost to the school reading programme with the Space Hop book collections staying in each school for just one month. The real challenge will now be for the schools to sustain the interest in reading that the project has generated. One of the boys at Zayed Bin Sultan asked if he could use his Space Hop membership card at the public library. Sadly not, but the teacher does not intend to let this enthusiasm fade and is planning more reading projects during the remainder of the school year.

Reference

S.D Krashen. 2004. *The Power of Reading*. Engelwood, CO: Libraries Unlimited

Paul Nation is professor of Applied Linguistics in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He has taught in Indonesia, Thailand, the United States, Finland, and Japan. His specialist interests are language teaching methodology and vocabulary learning.



Paul Nation

Victoria University Wellington
New Zealand

An experience approach to **reading**

There is a very useful activity that is very common in New Zealand schools. It is called an experience approach to reading and was first written about by a very inspiring teacher called Sylvia Ashton-Warner. It works in this way. The children draw a picture of something that recently happened to them. After they have drawn the picture they bring it up to the teacher who asks them what the picture is about. The teacher writes exactly what the children say underneath the picture. So if the child says "Yesterday my daddy drove the truck out of the drive, ran over the dog and squashed it flat" that is what the teacher writes underneath the picture. The teacher should not correct the child's language but writes what the child says. This then becomes the child's reading text for the day, and the child can read it to others in the class showing them the picture and

reading them the story. Each day a new picture is drawn and a new story is written underneath, and these stories are gathered together to become the child's reading book.

This is called an experience approach to reading because the child brings a lot of previous knowledge to the reading task. First, the ideas in the story are completely familiar to the child because the child has experienced them and drawn them. Second, the language in the story is completely familiar to the child because it is the child's words. Third, the discourse and organisation of the story is completely familiar because it is the child's story, spoken by the child. The only learning needed which is outside the child's experience is connecting the spoken forms and the written form provided by the teacher. This is the learning goal of the activity.

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Jonathan Marinus hails from Wellington, New Zealand – “the coolest little capital in the world” according to Lonely Planet. An experienced teacher of thinking skills, history and English, he now works for the Madares Al Ghad programme, providing English teachers at a local boys’ high school with professional support and training.



Jonathan Marinus
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Reading Is an **Art**. Master It.

It’s old. It’s long. It’s plain. In short, *How to Read a Book* is everything that we’re conditioned to dismiss or ignore.

To do so would be our loss, however. This 426-page guide to reading comprehension, first published in 1940, is rightly regarded as a “living classic” and a must-read for anyone serious about not merely reading, but reading *well*. The authors, Mortimer J. Adler and Charles van Doren, address everything from skimming effectively to comparing texts to using specific techniques to read things like imaginative literature, newspapers, scientific texts. Along the way, several key messages emerge:

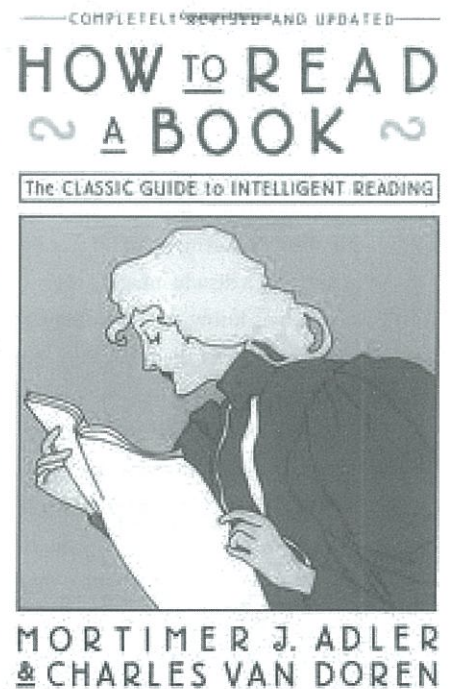
- ◆ Different reading material should be read in different ways.
- ◆ Spend only as much time on a book as it deserves – not too much, not too little.
- ◆ Pay attention to what you do understand and don’t be put off by what you don’t.
- ◆ Read actively! Don’t merely read for the sake of reading. Read to understand, to learn, to grow. Analyse and critique as you go.

The authors do all they can to ensure that there’s something for everyone. They even throw in recommended reading lists and do-it-yourself reading tests.

Of course, all this makes for a big book. It’s heft is intimidating. And yet *How to Read a Book* is, in fact, a fantastic convenience. Sure, you can surf the net and try to gather similar hints and tips on the same topic. You could attend workshops here and there. The chances are, though, that you’ll cover half the ground that Adler and van Doren do and take twice as long doing it.

That’s not to say the book doesn’t deserve abridgement. It does. But it’s a definitive work, worthwhile for any reader, but truly indispensable for anyone in the business of teaching and training others how to read. If that’s you, acquire a copy (from US\$12 on Amazon), read it, note the points that are most relevant to you and use them to have a go at designing, developing or even re-thinking reading activities and programmes you use in your classroom. The clarity and coherence this work offers will do much to deepen and refine both your teaching and learning of this essential skill. Does it sound like hard work? It will be. But then, true learning and growth is often painful. Anyone who says otherwise is a used car salesman.

In a world which forever trumpets the new and cutting edge, it’s risky to suggest that many of the best teaching resources were produced a long time ago. And yet, it’s the truth. This book is living proof.



Andrew Littlejohn is an author, teacher trainer and university academic. He has published numerous classroom texts, including *Cambridge English for Schools*, *Primary Colours*, and *Company to Company (CUP)*, an edited collection on process syllabuses and many articles and papers. His website, www.AndrewLittlejohn.net, contains a rich array of resources for language teachers, including more ideas on helping learners to become readers.



Andrew Littlejohn
Sultan Qaboos University
Oman

Tell me, why don't my students read?

It is a common complaint of teachers worldwide that their students do not read enough. Yet, as we all know, reading is at the heart of learning, and a student who is reluctant to read is instantly at a disadvantage. This is something that most students themselves know, so it is often curious to us that, despite our continual encouragement, they frequently only read when they are specifically required to do so, and rarely engage in what we might call 'independent reading'. In short, there is often a significant gap between *knowing how to read* and then making a step further towards *becoming a reader*. The question I want to look at in this brief article is what is it that makes the transition towards *becoming a reader* such an elusive one?

One of the most important points to realise in understanding a reluctance to read is that there are at least two key factors involved: cognitive abilities that we use when we read, and the *socio-emotional experience* of reading itself. Typically, teachers have emphasised the development of cognitive abilities, and it is indeed this which underpins the ability to read. It is the socio-emotional dimension, however, that affects a desire to put these cognitive abilities into action.

From the perspective of what the brain actually does when we read, we now know that numerous different realms of knowledge are drawn upon. At its most basic, reading involves decoding symbols – turning them into sounds in our head. But the ability to extract meaning from the sound-symbol relationship requires much, much more – knowledge of how the

language is used, of how grammar works, of vocabulary, of the structure and conventions of texts, of background knowledge related to the content involved, and so on. Thus, we say that reading is an *interactive* process – in which the text not only conveys meaning to the reader, but the reader also brings meaning to the text. The extent to which a developing reader is able or unable to do either of these things will directly affect how much 'work' is involved in reading. If, for example, a reader is unfamiliar with the vocabulary of the text, the type of text or the topic itself, they may expend greater effort in trying to make sense of it. It is likely that the amount of 'work' involved will have a direct effect on motivation to read, so it should not be surprising that students who do not have adequate cognitive skills steer clear of reading when they can.



There are at least two lessons for us from this. First, teachers involved in reading skills development need to ensure that students are adequately prepared in all aspects of the reading process – not only in sound-symbol decoding but in building lots of experience with different types of text, different genres and ways in which written language differs from spoken language. Secondly, teachers also need to think carefully about *what* they ask students to read since it is important to develop a sense of competence, of success in reading to stimulate a desire to read more. A feeling of failure in reading is likely to exacerbate negative emotions towards reading.

While weak abilities in the cognitive aspect of reading may have a dampening effect on motivation to read, we also need to recognise that attitudes towards reading may have a much deeper origin. Research, for example, has found that the single greatest predictor for success in reading, and for ultimately going on to *become a reader*, is the extent to which children are read *to* in their early years. It seems that the formative experience of being read to is a major factor in shaping a child's attitude and approach to reading in later life. It is not difficult to understand why this is so. The bedtime story, for example, is packed full of learning experiences, all largely positive. Not only does the pre-literate child learn through simple exposure that those strange black marks on a page can convey interesting, engaging meanings, and that text and pages move in a particular direction as the adult reads through the story. They may also learn to associate all of this with emotional warmth and closeness. The parent sitting on the bed or sofa, a blanket over both of them, with an arm around the child embracing both the child and book – all this produces positive emotional experiences which become bound together with the act of reading in such a way that it will last a lifetime.

Unfortunately, such positive experiences of reading and being read to are not universal. If reading is experienced as an alien, taught skill which involves hard work, rather than as something to share and enjoy, it is unlikely that the same positive feelings will be stimulated when an opportunity or requirement to read presents itself. Thus, a reluctance to read may have a deep rooted explanation. We can't simply

expect that those who know *how to read* will somehow miraculously become *people who read*.

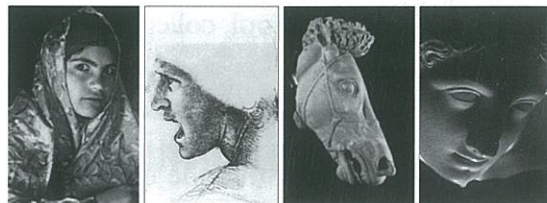
The realisation that the socio-emotional dimension of reading plays such a powerful role means that teachers not only need to teach the skill of reading; they also need to 'sell' reading itself. It needs to be presented as a rewarding, engaging, and positive experience. There are many things that teachers can do in this regard. In schools, for example, attractive, changing book displays which engage curiosity can draw students towards reading. Similarly, the animated reading aloud of the beginning of a story can encourage students to read the rest of the story. Through ways such as this, reading can be experienced not simply as something that needs to be done, but as something which stimulates thought, interaction, enjoyment and learning, and which provides reasons to become a reader.



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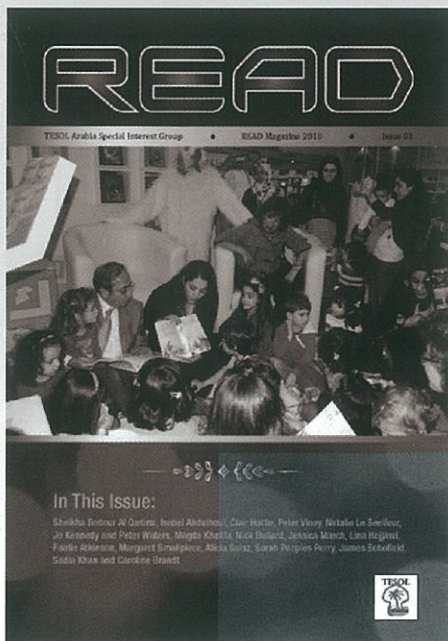
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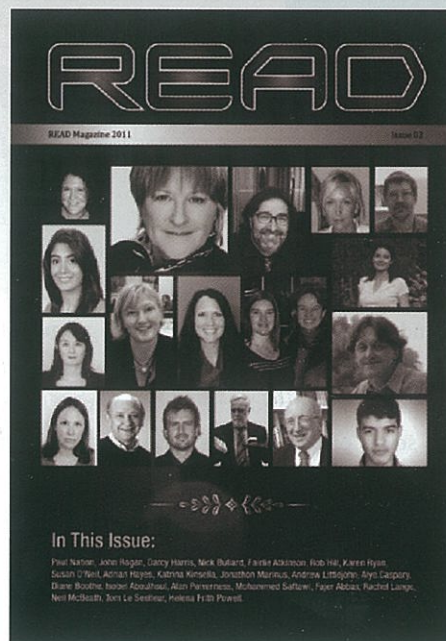
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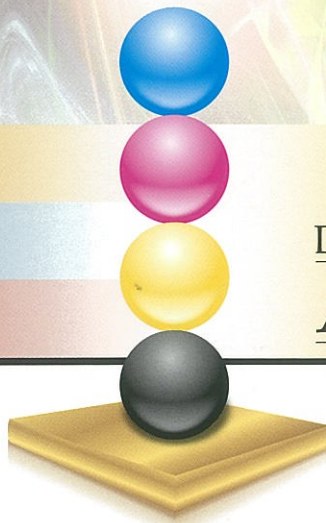
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