



Book Power: Literacy through Literature, Year 1

Books Reviewed:

[Book Power: Literacy through Literature, Year 1](#) [1]

Issue:

[178](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Jill Bennett](#) [3]

[New to the Choice:](#)

off

BfK Rating:

5

Hurray! A publication that puts literature firmly back at the heart of literacy (though for some of us it's never been anywhere else). Taking as its starting point and underpinning the whole of this book, and particularly the element 'Responding and reflecting', is 'Booktalk' the scaffolding or 'repertoire of questions' discussed and exemplified in Aidan Chambers' seminal **Tell Me ? Children, Reading, and Talk**. (This is the most challenging to get right for the children.)

The other elements of the approach are 'Interpreting and performing' ? through storytelling and retelling, drama and role-play, freeze-framing, hot seating, writing in role, visualising, drawing/annotating, shared writing, book making, play-based experiences like small world, story box play and in role-play areas. And, the final element is 'Exploring and analysing text' which features mapping, comparison charts in respect of language, style or content, debating and arguing, and finally looking at language ? the very particular language used in the book under study.

Each of these 'Key Teaching Approaches' is exemplified through eight books and an author study. All have been selected for their potential through words and illustrations, to engage children and open up their feelings, ideas and talk in response. Of course, only those key teaching approaches best suited to each book, not every one, are used in the exemplars.

The selected books are Alexis Deacon's **Beegu**, Mini Grey's **Traction Man is Here**, **The Owl and the Pussy Cat** illustrated by Louise Voce, Jessica Souhami's rendition of a traditional Indian tale entitled **No Dinner!**, two stories ? one Russian, one African-American ? from Hugh Lupton's folktale collection **The Story Tree**, Niki Daly's **Jamela's Dress**, Lydia Monks' **Aaaarrgghh, Spider!**, Sendak's classic **Where the Wild Things Are** and Donaldson and Scheffler's **The Snail and the Whale**. Finally there is a six to seven week study of Quentin Blake's work and in particular three picture books, **Mister Magnolia**, **Cockatoos** and **The Green Ship**.

Each book is introduced through an outline of the story, followed by possible themes for exploration, learning aims, the particular key teaching approaches suggested and 'can we never get away from this' ? 'Links with PNS objectives'. In some instances there are also suggestions for setting the scene prior to starting the unit.

The suggested length of each unit varies between three and seven weeks depending on the particular book, but surely like everything else in this approach, is not intended to be a straightjacket. And therein lies one of my fears: exciting and

timely though it is to have this publication, there is a danger: that unless teachers really do know about books, not least the ones

featured, this is just what it might become. Assuredly the author does not want this to happen; but until the present generations of teachers in schools and those coming from colleges, make it their business to explore the richness of children's literature for themselves, it could all too easily result in countless Year One classes all doing an author study of Quentin Blake and

running through the exemplars like a syllabus. My second fear is, sadly, that many teachers have become so used to being told exactly what to do that there now exists among them a kind of learned helplessness. So, will they be capable of going beyond the information given and applying the approach to other equally exciting books and authors?

The book comes with an almost obligatory CD Rom and I have to say I found this disappointing and dare I say it, depressing. Do teachers now really need to be shown how to make animal headbands, shadow and other kinds of puppets, story boxes or games?

Running Order:

1

Source URL (retrieved on Nov '19): <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/178/childrens-books/reviews/book-power-literacy-through-literature-year-1>

Links:

[1] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/book-power-literacy-through-literature-year-1>

[2] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/178>

[3] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/jill-bennett>