Teaching English as an Additional Language using Oxford Reading Tree

As well as providing an ideal teaching resource for children whose first language is English, Oxford Reading Tree can also be used very successfully with children learning English as an Additional Language (EAL). The core characters and the situations they find themselves in are easy for most children to identify with, and the very gradual build-up of vocabulary and reading skills is helpful to EAL learners as well as to native speakers of English. The emphasis on speaking and listening within Oxford Reading Tree is also beneficial to EAL learners, as discussing and enjoying the stories together is a great way of encouraging talk in a fun and non-stressful context.

The Oxford Reading Tree Teacher’s Guide For Children Learning English includes lessons and photocopiable pages to introduce and make best use of Oxford Reading Tree as a resource to teach English as a second language.

Case study

Jane Langrell, Literacy Co-ordinator at Canning Street Primary School, Newcastle, says:

“Ours is an inner-city primary school in the West End of Newcastle. About 75% of our children are learners of English as an additional language (EAL). We have a high proportion of children with special needs, too.

We find Oxford Reading Tree works really well for all the children, including the EAL learners. For the EAL children in particular, it’s really important that Reading Tree gives so much support for speaking and listening as well as developing early reading skills.

We start off by introducing and talking about the characters and what they get up to, using the Big Books as a focus so that children can see what we’re talking about. We also use the Flash Cards to introduce words and characters. One of the things we really like about Reading Tree is the repetition of phrases and key words, which helps to build up children’s confidence. And as teachers we also feel confident that if children work through the early stages systematically, they will get to know a wide range of ‘tricky’ words as well as learning how to read decodable words.

The children really enjoy the humour in the stories, and they find it easy to relate to the characters so they really do want to read on and find out what happens to them. We use Oxford Reading Tree throughout the school, and particularly in Reception and Key Stage 1. Of course we use lots of other books and resources too, particularly with the older children, but in the first couple of years at school, Reading Tree really is at the heart of our children’s reading.”

The flexibility of Oxford Reading Tree

Oxford Reading Tree can be used in a very wide variety of classroom settings, and users often have their own favourite aspects of the programme. The following case studies show how three different schools use Oxford Reading Tree.

Case study

Philippa Roy-Chowdhury, Deputy Head Teacher and Literacy Co-ordinator at Thorley Hill Primary School, Bishop’s Stortford, Hertfordshire, says:

“At Thorley Hill we have a one form entry and a total of 230 pupils, including the Nursery. We have a mixed catchment area, and are admitting a growing number of children with special needs, including Down’s Syndrome and Autism. At present we have only a few children with English as an Additional Language, but this may well change as expansion at Stansted Airport attracts more workers from abroad.

We use Oxford Reading Tree books and materials extensively up to Year 4. Although we supplement it with other schemes, Oxford Reading Tree is our core programme for both guided reading and take-home books. I especially like the early stories as they motivate children to read. The stories are exciting but also offer support through repetition and careful progression to more demanding vocabulary. The staff feel confident with the scheme and also enjoy sharing the stories with the children.

Although the children gain confidence from familiarity with the style and the characters appearing in the books, I use other schemes and books to broaden their experience of other authors and writing styles.

We have just purchased Oxford Reading Tree MagicPage and I am about to use an INSET time to introduce it to all the staff. I am really excited about using it and think it will be a very useful tool for teachers as well as exciting for the children.

I have used Oxford Reading Tree since its introduction over twenty years ago. I think it is a really valuable scheme, especially the stories that can be linked to other subjects, such as the Victorians or the Egyptians. I have yet to find a child who doesn’t enjoy the books!”

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