

# EFL GAZETTE

Which newspaper is circulated to schools, colleges, universities, libraries, examination boards and selected bookshops?

# EFL GAZETTE

If you want qualified professional EFL Personnel, what is the number 1 recruitment medium?

# EFL GAZETTE

roduction, teacher's notes and answers - could be used as a free-standing unit.

Since reading and speaking are closely related classroom activities, this book could very well serve the two objectives.

As a non-native speaker of English, however, I have to say that *Active Reading* is too anglicised. It lacks a panoramic international outlook and appeal.

A good number of the book's units relate directly to

things apart from the ins and outs of British culture. Perhaps it could be improved by diversifying the subjects it tackles - taking an international perspective.

Another problem arises in

elementary and pre-intermediate levels. It is informative and entertaining and can be used to encourage discourse in the class.

Omar M Dahnin teaches in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

## Turning back to poetry

*Practical Stylistics*, H.G. Widdowson, OUP 1992, £11.95

Bryan Robinson

An operation, convalescence, long walks through the local cemetery - a place 'proper to grow wise in' - all these seemed to me unlikely ingredients for a book written by Henry Widdowson.

My only previous real contact with the author had been a lecture given on a rainy Monday evening in January at the British Institute, Valencia. My mental image of a presence filled with energy and vitality could

not possibly match up with that presented here. Yet this book does provide real contact with its author, of a kind his other works have not given me. The intertextuality of the writings of H.G. Widdowson: now there's a topic for a PhD thesis if ever I heard one!

In point of fact, *Practical Stylistics* is a deeply thoughtful work aimed at people involved in Education with a capital 'E', and not just at our more limited EFL-specific domain. It is a book in two parts, of which three chapters 'The point of poetry', 'Educational relevance', and 'Pedagogic approaches: against exegesis' stand out in my mind as the intellectual and personal bridges between 'The significance of poetry' (Part One) and 'The teaching of poetry' (Part Two). The

"A deeply thoughtful work aimed at people involved in education."

work is easy to read, as the 'heavier' linguistic references are dealt with in detailed end notes and

through the bibliography.

The concept of the contextualisation of poetry stands out as the most significant proposition put forward by the author. Widdowson uses a wide range of texts to illustrate his approach: William Carlos Williams' *This Is Just To Say*,

Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, and Philip Larkin's *The Trees*, for example. With *This Is Just To Say*, he suggests we contextualize the message - a

note "left in a kitchen for somebody to find in the morning". We paraphrase it; and we recognise it for its superficiality as a real life

communication: 'The recipient of such a note, a wife, let us suppose, or some significant other... (would) think no more about it. This contextualisation has significant consequences for us as readers of the poem, and for our relationships with both its author, and with the putative recipient.'

Widdowson further explores these factors in his analysis of other texts, proposing poetic derivations in classroom activities. In Part Two, these "derivations" take on a number of forms, in which Widdowson proposes we play with the language of verse by, for example, taking one original poem - he uses

Robert Frost's *Dust of Snow* - and recasts it in the light of another on the same subject: in this case, Theodore Roethke's *Night Crow*. Different

"The personality of the author and the charm of his writing are the strongest impressions made."

propositions as to how we might do this lead him to present five "re-castings" of the original verse.

Throughout the book, Widdowson refers to more directly classroom-oriented publications which are examples of his theoretical work.

In conclusion, it must be said that the personality of the author and the charm of his writing are the two strongest impressions made on the reader by *Practical Stylistics*. This book urges teachers to bring poetry (back) into their teaching repertoire, and to look further afield for other influences which they can bring into the education, with a small 'e' of those they work with and for: their learners. Bryan Robinson teaches Applied Linguistics at the University of Granada, Spain.