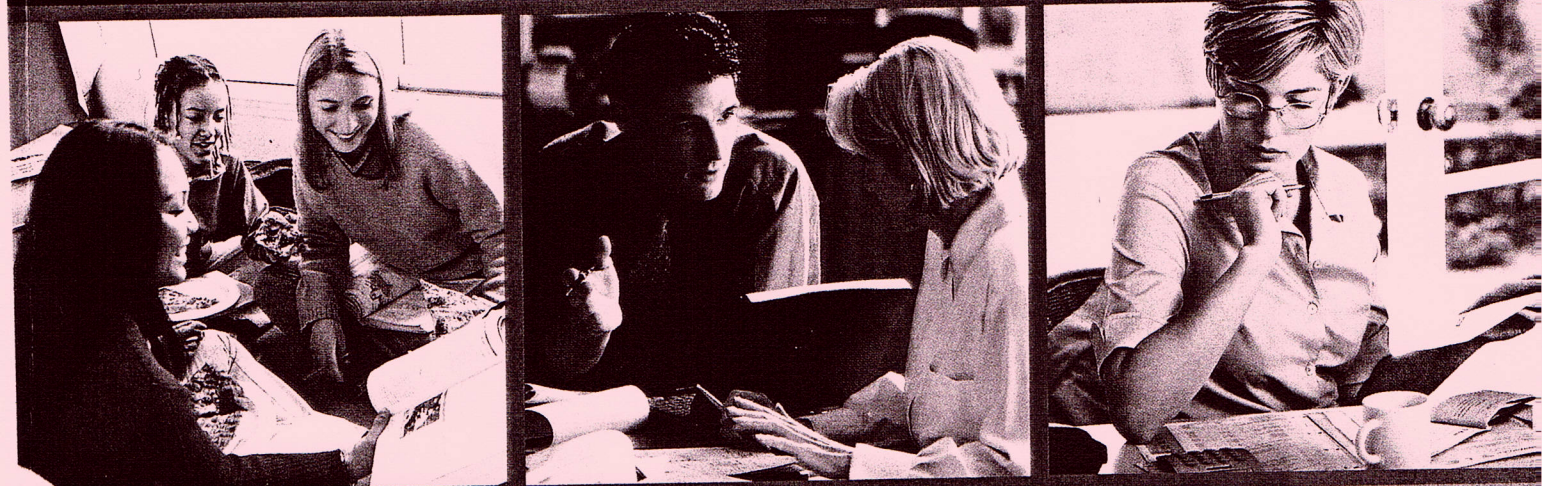


January 2001

MODERN ENGLISH TEACHER

www.onlineMET.com



Including...

New technologies and the English teacher • Hamish Norbrook

Jargon, clichés and stuff • Bryan Bennett

The newspaper project • Victoria Chan

Writing about beliefs • Eleanor Watts

ACE: the Access Certificate in ELT • Richard West

VOLUME

10

NUMBER

1

BRINGING TEACHERS TOGETHER

MODERN ENGLISH TEACHER

EDITORIAL

If happy students make happy teachers (and a number of contributors to this issue of MET think they do), what makes happy students?

The writers of the two articles in Current Issues would say that it all depends. Mustafa Zülküf Altan argues that it depends on whether their particular intelligences are engaged. Gül Keskil and Paşa Tevfik Cephe describe a piece of research which shows that happiness varies according to age.

For the writers in Classroom Ideas, a recurring theme is that the key to happy students is a feeling of personal involvement. Victoria Chan describes *The newspaper project*, which got her students involved in working closely with each other to produce their own class newspaper. Sue Murray's *Authentic interest* tells us how she surprised her students by showing them they could enjoy a text way above their level, simply because the subject matter was close to their hearts. Lindsay Miller, in *A writing lesson*, shows how an impersonal coursebook lesson can be converted into one which draws on the students' own experiences. Ben Walker plays with fire in *Turn your students into Agony Aunts*, but with surprisingly positive results. And Minodora Otilia Simion's *Grammar can be fun!* tells us how a grammar practice that

drew on the imagination and sense of humour of her students turned her 'professional' bad mood into a feeling of elation. Happy students, happy teachers.

But what makes happy magazine editors? Happy readers, I'd say. Here's just a sample of the many reactions we have received to this new format.

I got the new MET issue in the post today – wow, it is really impressive. Congratulations on the good work. *Andrea Nava (Italy)*

Just wanted to say how fantastic the new MET looks! *Sarah Douglas (Heinemann/Macmillan ELT)*

I normally hate it when editors decide to change the layout of a mag I like and which gives me security (the mag and the old layout). I did not get this feeling when I opened the new look MET. Clear, open. Lots of space. So I did not feel lost and have navigational worries. *Mario Rinvloucri (Pilgrims, UK)*

To all of you who have gone to the trouble of letting us know – thank you.

Thérèse Tobin



Editor: *Thérèse Tobin*

Reviews Editor: *Roger Gower*, writer, freelance ELT teacher and teacher trainer.

'About Language' Editor: *David Maule*, Senior Lecturer at Stevenson College, Edinburgh, and writer.

'People and Places' Editor: *Susan Fearn*, radio producer and writer, UK.

Bits & PCs Editor: *Martin Eayrs*, freelance consultant with an interest in ELT publishing and Internet projects, Webmaster of the OnlineMET Web site and editor of *LATEFL Issues*.

Editorial Board

Jeremy Harmer is a writer of coursebooks and on methodology. He is a teacher trainer and an ELT consultant. He is editor of the Longman 'How to' series.

Andy Hopkins is a freelance ELT teacher, teacher trainer and writer. He is Series Editor of Penguin Readers.

Hilary Maxwell-Hyslop is a freelance teacher, teacher trainer, researcher and writer and was until recently Senior Projects Manager at Eurocentres UK.

Jenny Pugsley is Senior Moderator Language for Trinity College London, where she works on the development of their teacher training programmes.

Shelagh Rixon is an ELT writer and a Lecturer in the Centre for English Language Teacher Education at the University of Warwick.

Madeleine du Vivier is a teacher and teacher trainer at University College London and a freelance materials writer.

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Advertisement Manager: Janet Powell, MET Advertising Manager, P.O. Box No. 6333, Sawbridgeworth, Herts CM21 9AF.
Tel/fax: +44 (0) 1279 726602
E-mail: jcpowell@compuserve.com

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improvised; several are simulated radio talk shows. For most of these tasks, as an extension activity the teacher has to write or dictate short questions which are in the teacher's notes. The tape also contains recordings of eight songs all sung in several vastly different non-native English accents; the appendix at the end of the book contains the words to all of these.

The most interesting section I found was Day 30 – 'Days of the Week', which deals with the origins and derivation of each day: Friday is named after the Goddess of Love 'Frigg' or 'Freya'. Many cultures disagree on the first day of the week, too. Did you know also that speakers of Romance languages don't use capitals for days of the week? This book is filled with fascinating facts and will, I feel, provoke readers to indulge themselves in many units.

In most situations one copy of this book for each language department will probably suffice. Further support for issues in this book is available in *Discussions A-Z* (Wallwork, CUP, 1997) in the same photocopiable materials series.

Wayne Trotman

(Received June 2000)

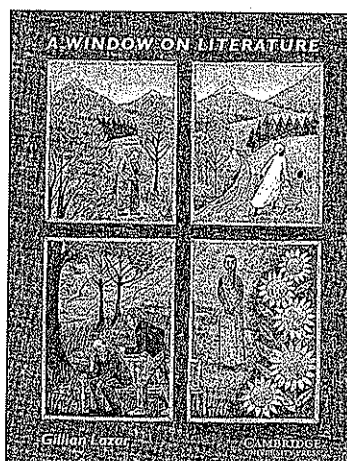
Wayne Trotman is a freelance teacher-trainer at The British Council Teachers' Centre in Izmir, Turkey.

A Window on Literature

Gillian Lazar

Cambridge University Press 1999

Paperback ISBN 0 521 56770 X
Cassette ISBN 0 521 56769 6



I have always found that the more adult my learners are, the more likely they are to want me to use literary texts in the classroom. If, like me, you enjoy using literature but you don't have the time to get into preparing materials yourself, then *A Window on Literature* will provide you with a thorough, and thoroughly enjoyable, means of introducing literary texts that are genuinely stimulating, and accessible. What's more, I'm sure that once you use a couple of units, you will find yourself drawn into preparing your own materials from whatever you and your learners happen to like reading yourselves. Gillian Lazar's approach, which involves exploiting authentic literary texts *at the level of the learners*, is one that you can apply to set books, if you have them, in order to make the literature class a joy, and not a dread.

As you would expect with a complementary text of this kind, the book is slim. The 12 units fit into 82 pages, and in total present 18 literary texts of varied length: from 10 lines to 40 plus. In addition, there is a key giving the predicted responses to many of the activities. Each unit is based around a theme: Fairy Stories, Choosing a Place to Live, and Unexplained Events, come from three consecutive units, and give you a taste of the

breadth the book offers. The themes are depicted in 20th century poetry, extracts from novels, plays, and short stories. Predictably perhaps, many of the authors are British – like Stevie Smith and Harold Pinter – but there are also selections from writers you, like me, may be less familiar with: the New Zealanders Katherine Mansfield and Janet Frame, Zimbabwean Paul Chidyausiku, South African Jeni Couzyn, and African Americans Barbara Mahone and Langston Hughes, among many others. A little surprisingly, there is even a translation: of the Czech poet Miroslav Holub's 'Fairy Tale'. In short, there are themes and writers to appeal to students and their teachers the world over.

*...there are themes and
writers to appeal to
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The structure of each unit is based around the presentation of the texts, and the follow-up language-focus and literary-focus activities. Units are not graded in any way, so, as the teacher, you can pick and choose according to your learners' needs and interests. The units begin with a topic-based warm-up, and then comes the text. There is an accompanying cassette, so presentation can be through reading, listening, or reading and listening. There are no listening activities as such, because they would clearly spoil the aesthetic of the texts, but the tape is a valuable complement, and not just for the benefit of non-native speaker teachers. Authentic recordings of the range of accents represented by the authors broaden the learners' receptive capacity and help wean them from the one, known voice. They are built on by activities that call for learners to interpret intonation and mood, and to act out fragments.

The activities presented are tightly structured in the main, to ensure that they are within the grasp of intermediate learners. There are matching

activities for vocabulary; sentences about the text which require learners to identify the one which has the same meaning; and summary texts with incorrect information for them to pick out. All quite straightforward when you see them, but carefully written to encourage, rather than daunt the learner. Activities call for a controlled approach to the material, leading learners to show confidence in their interpretations, and to go on and write or speak creatively in the final activity. Units end with some notes, including biodata on the author, and definitions of the more obscure vocabulary.

Unfortunately, literature is one of the low-budget products for most publishers. With a slim volume like this – on sale in the UK for only £9.00, according to the CUP website – there are no photocopiable materials. Activities are sometimes presented with boxes and gaps that learners will be tempted to fill in on the page. This means that, inevitably, you will need a class set to be able to exploit it well, and many school heads will need convincing of its worth. Another fact of commercial life is that only black and white photographs and comic-strip drawings are used to lighten the presentation. Some of the drawings used to clarify vocabulary are more confusing than illuminating: at first sight, the rabbit warren (p. 82) looks more like the branches of a tree!

Literary texts do really deserve better. If you have been pushed into teaching an EFL class a set text for an exam, say, or if you simply want to be able to involve literature in your teaching without having to go to too much trouble, *A Window on Literature* is a resource that both the teacher – you – and the learners can really enjoy.

Bryan Robinson

Received July 2000

Bryan Robinson teaches translation at the University of Granada, Spain. He is currently Examiner responsible for English B (EFL) with the International Baccalaureate Organization.

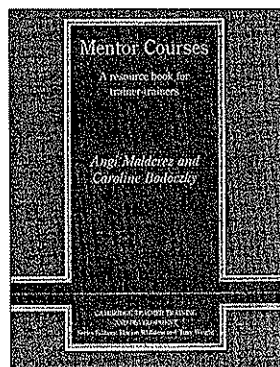
A Book I Like

Mentor courses. A resource book for trainer-trainers

Angi Malderez and Caroline Bodóczy

Cambridge University Press 1999

Paperback ISBN 0 521 56690 8
Hardback ISBN 0 521 56204 X



Mentor Courses is a practical book aimed at course leaders involved in the training and development of school-based mentor teachers working with student teachers. It offers a broad range of activities intended to sensitise mentor teachers to trainee teachers' needs and to develop the skills considered desirable for effective mentoring. The addition of reproducible materials, designed to encourage the exploration of the roles and responsibilities of mentors, results in a comprehensive and easy-to-use course book.

Mentor Courses evolved from the authors' experience preparing mentors for a new English language teacher pre-service programme in Hungary. This programme requires student teachers to teach a class for

an entire school year, rather than the much shorter periods normally given to teaching practice. In turn, this longer involvement of student-teachers in a real classroom places new demands and responsibilities on the cooperating school-based teachers – i.e. the mentors. Beyond the more traditional objectives of helping student teachers develop effective presentation and classroom management skills, mentors are expected to support student teachers in the development of 'deeper teaching competencies' (p.3). To help mentors prepare for this new role, Malderez and Bodóczy developed mentor courses that enable cooperating teachers to understand and practise their new role in a sheltered environment. A lack of suitable published material led them to develop the activities contained in the book, which they designed to facilitate a course of approximately 90 contact hours plus 30 hours of tasks and assignments.

The basic underlying premise of *Mentor Courses* is that successful mentoring is difficult but that appropriate skills can be developed through training, nurturing and sensitivity. It can be encouraged through careful preparation, which includes consciousness-raising, sensitising to the relevant issues, role-plays and evaluating. Malderez and Bodóczy's approach to mentor preparation reduces the emphasis on lectures in favour of varied activities that encourage course participants to experience their reactions to a range of situations, reflect on their experience and reactions and discuss them with peers, in order to hone their interpersonal skills and to expand their knowledge base. Key