

Book Reviews

Resources for Teaching English 14-16 by D Hill (2010), Continuum, ISBN: 9780826421005

Resources for Teaching English 14-16 is a useful textbook offering beginning and established English teachers alike general lesson plans that can be adapted to suit particular classes. Within most of the plans a resource is recommended and thereafter the plans largely consist of a three- to four-part structure, incorporating the aims, outcomes, starter, main and plenary of each suggested lesson. Individual plans also include, for the most part, ideas for differentiation and homework and also work sheets of activities for students. The textbook is set out in sections, which range in content from, for example, 'The world of school', 'The world of work' and 'Wild things', to 'Family', 'On the road' and 'Strange stories'. In each section there is usually a reference to a main text and thereafter a specific lesson plan that focuses on the chosen text. For example, in section four there is a plan based around DH Lawrence's *The Virgin and the Gypsy*. This lesson is concerned with characterisation and in particular the character of Granny. Some of the tasks that are interwoven within this lesson plan are clearly for able groups of students. Nevertheless, the manner in which the plan is devised encourages students to compare the character to their own grandmother. This allows less able students a means to appreciate the text in a more accessible and meaningful way. *Resources for Teaching English 14-16*, then, offers readers a practical toolbox of accessible resources and plans, based around texts commonly employed in the English classroom.

Karen Lowing

The Essential Guide to Secondary Mathematics by Colin Foster (2012), Routledge, ISBN: 978-0-415-52771-2

This is written by a highly experienced mathematics teacher who understands the realities of the secondary classroom, and links insights from the latest research into mathematical learning with useful strategies and ideas for engaging teaching. The text is punctuated by frequent tasks, some mathematical and others more reflective, which are designed to encourage independent thinking. This is a book for all teachers of mathematics, whether you are new to the profession or well established. Colin Foster's book is a distillation of his experience as a mathematics teacher, learner and researcher in mathematics education. It provides a well-judged mixture of practical advice, informed by his extensive reading in research and theory. He addresses the usual 'folk theories' about teaching - 'Never smile before Christmas' and so on - and provides a nuanced, evidence-based evaluation of these mantras. There is much here which could be immediately applied in all mathematics classrooms to benefit your teaching and your learners. I particularly enjoyed the 'tasks' placed throughout the book that encourage the reader to engage in mathematical thinking, demonstrating the author's view that a teacher of mathematics should be an active mathematical thinker. A highlight for me was the chapter on equality and difference, where the author makes a powerful argument that the current organisation of mathematical education in much of the UK disadvantages many (the majority of?) learners. It deserves to be widely read.

David Wright

Website Reviews

There are now so many amazing websites with ideas, information and resources for science lessons that it is difficult for the busy teacher to keep up-to-date. www.schoolscience.co.uk provides an excellent starting point for anyone wanting a quick and easily navigable summary of available resources linked to key topics and Key Stages. The site has a wide range of downloadable curriculum resources as well as direct links to the sites of educational suppliers and publishers. A useful search facility is included but the site is very clearly set out and extremely user-friendly, so purposeful browsing will very quickly throw up something of interest to any teacher.

www.biologyguide.net is essentially a revision site for biology. Clicking on a link gives a comprehensive revision guide and also allows users to edit the content of the lists. There is some interactive material on the site; however, what there is points to old exam notes and some multiple choice questions. Despite this, [biologyguide.net](http://www.biologyguide.net) is a clear and well organised site purely aimed at aiding revision, and may well provide a useful framework for students to build on coming up to exams. This is an innovative resource that can be used to complement and enhance class and practical work notes.

www.learningalive.co.uk is a website sponsored by RM Education and is divided into three sections: 'Primary', 'Secondary' and 'Living Library'. These sections will help you find the information which is most relevant to you, and they are structured roughly in the same way. After clicking on the Secondary section, you can hover over each subsection and amazing things happen. Visually and technologically, it is very appealing and exciting; if anything is going to encourage pupils to visit the site and engage in the activities, this will. Particular features include 'That's gross!' and '5 things you should know about', which changes topic. This is a funky, lively site where pupils won't get bored!

www.itslearning.co.uk is an online learning platform that allows teachers to share resources with pupils. The website is easy to use. Registration is not free, but the homepage is easy to navigate around, with instructions of how to get started. The 'Tips and Tricks' link takes you to a page which lists several interesting areas to explore, based on case studies in particular schools or colleges. Examples in the tips section include 'Peer assessment'; 'Motivating tests' and 'Tips for a new school year'.

Adam Pennington