

Responses to

What, How and Why: a manual of better English

1. Tim Oates – Research Director - Cambridge Assessment

I am very interested in both the development of your IGCSE textbook and *What, How and Why*. Textbooks which are not narrowly linked to exam specifications are few and far between but should be FAR MORE common. I have looked through the content in detail and am very interested in the thinking behind content and the sequencing of content. An approach which gives a comprehensive programme of learning but not tied too closely to NC or specific exams is indeed the right strategy.

Peter Inson's book is the kind of text which we need in the education system in this country - a rich and wide-ranging resource which does not reduce the acquisition of facility in and understanding of English language to a narrow diet of examination preparation. But far from looking away from the requirements of public examinations, the book encourages the kind of learning which is associated with higher attainment in exams, through a deeper understanding of language structures.

So often, books have to be discarded the moment a new exam specification is produced. Not so with this text. It promises to be an enduring resource for teachers and learners which can support learning associated with different exam boards, different awards, and remain relevant and supportive as exams specifications shift and change.

2. Julia Hayden – secondary teacher

Did you ever think that you knew everything about the English language, but came unstuck when you tried to put it into words? Or do you lack confidence in your literacy levels? If so, then read this extremely useful manual on how the English language works. It contains very clear and relevant real-life examples that a range of readers can relate to: from secondary school pupils, to adults and tutors alike. I have not only used examples from this book successfully with KS3, GCSE and A Level English Language students, but also to refresh my own subject knowledge before teaching grammar in my classroom.

Brightly-coloured text boxes highlight key information and asterisks draw attention to main points that you need to remember. The activities and tests enable readers to consolidate their learning, recognise their progress and identify any aspects that they need to look over again. The 'essentials' sections provide quick and easy glossaries of technical terms, again with clear examples. There are lots of other useful tips for retaining learning and making helpful revision notes, with a good mixture of reading and writing tasks throughout. The author has also offered direct links to his website, in order to provide further assistance. His classroom experiences provide not only humour, but also reassurance that these approaches are successful. A super book!

I showed your manual to some bright boys in year 7. They liked the use of the idea of a car manual and the bees and they could relate to it. They found your explanations clear and liked the boxes at the side. They were able to do the activities correctly directly after reading each section.

3. Bruce Gillham - Past President of the United Kingdom Reading Association (now the UK Literacy Association)

It is a serious matter that whilst literacy demands in the workplace and in business, social and leisure environments continue to increase the capacity of a substantial proportion of our population to read and understand day-to-day communication, in functional terms, remains woefully inadequate and may well be declining. A serious attempt to bridge this widening gap will be very welcome. The idea at the heart of this work is extremely valuable; there is excellent material here.

4. Helen Diamond - Bloomsbury

I can see how much time and effort you have put into making sure it all hangs together, makes sense and is interesting to read. I am wondering if it might be worth you trying publishers who create materials for the EFL market or for adult literacy or who have a wider remit than we do? It's clear that your students benefit from your enthusiasm and depth of knowledge.

5. Sarah MacBurnie - Garnet

Garnet Education deals solely with ELT materials and therefore your book would not be something that we could publish. However, I have looked at your sample unit and think it is an excellent idea. I do hope you find a publisher and get your book into the classroom.

6. Chris Boor - Pearson

We would be delighted to have an author and teacher of your experience on board. (For contributions to a more conventional text book)

7. Katy Bulbullian – English tutor based in Germany

I enjoyed what I read and I like your style - I enjoy your historical anecdotes, which explain things about my language that I never knew!

For people who have entered the working world and suddenly feel they wish they understood their own language better, so that they could put it to better use, this is an interesting book to have on your shelf at home or, if you are an employer wanting your employees to improve their skills, in the office.

8. Claire Chalcraft – Aiglon College, Switzerland

I followed the links and would be interested in having a closer look. How might I purchase a copy?

9. Daisy – Research Director at ARK Academies.

The textbook certainly does include a lot of the material we think is important, and that we want to teach. One of the reasons we like this so much is that there are lots of exercises and activities after every new concept is introduced.

10. Charlie - 15.

He told me that he appreciated learning about faster communication with the written language. He liked the way I explained things.

I have noticed that there are some things that do make me laugh while reading which I think makes this book perfect for any student....this way the reader wouldn't get bored. I have noticed you have been putting words in Bold....this just makes everything much better. It's a good way of helping people identify the key words.

I think this book would be really good for my school work. It's easy to skip through and find the help and information you need.

11. Charlie's mother

Having not been at school for many years now, and English not being my strongest subject, I was surprised that even I would be able to refer to these pages to assist my son with homework or revision. Great revision too, with quick, easy commentary pages to refer to.

Great exercise pages that test you as you go along, and as, in my case, remind you to go back and read the previous page more efficiently.

Layout – kept clear and simple. Information – easy to follow

12. BBC Radio Essex

It made for a really good feature and we did have some really good listener interaction from listeners.

We had a great call from a lady whose 19-year-old grandson said he felt let down by his teachers when it came to his literacy. I also took a couple of calls from people wanting to know where they could get your book once it is published.

13. Lee Monks – Plain English Campaign

Your 'English User's Manual' is an admirable attempt at drawing together a wide range of information and often very entertaining - a great idea.

14. Helen – Princes Trust

It sounds really interesting. Jackie has told me about your work, and I know she is currently looking into the viability of incorporating it with our programme in schools.

15. Jane Morgan - tutor

I bought a copy of your, 'English - First Language' (pub Heinemann 2011) recently and have started using it for the boy I mentioned to you. I'm very pleased with it and it's just right for him. I love your style and the whole tone of it!

16. Tammy Dowling - Education Otherwise

I would be happy to review your book in our newsletter, it sounds like something that our readers would be interested in learning about.

17. Ben – 14 year-old school refuser.

You tell your reader how to put more depth into their writing by subtly adding non-important information. The sentences in the activity were funny which helps to engage the reader in them and makes me want to get the answers right. You keep saying “we” and it's like talking with you. The sentences are so different from normal English books; it doesn't feel like actual school at all.

18 James, 18.

You have created a virtual classroom where there is no sarcastic teacher and no bullies or disruptives, but only a teacher who encourages students. You have led me back to the classroom, prepared to learn this time, because you had removed aspects of many classrooms that students dislike.

19. Liz - tutor

Awesome - I love this and would definitely buy it. I'd also recommend it to my tutees, particularly years 9-11. I used bits of it with a very dyslexic year 10 student and she really appreciated how easy it was to understand. Clear, easily accessible, interesting and it has a lovely, friendly tone. Fabulous stuff!

20. Lawrence

whose school predicted a U failure at GCSE, tackled the first six chapters in six lessons and passed with a C.

