

Book title:

Open Doors to Quality Writing: Ideas for Writing Inspired by Great Writers for Ages 10 to 13

Author:

Bob Cox

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The review**1. What is your overall impression of the book?**

The book offers a great range of resources to use in the UKS2/LKS3 classroom, with a focus on using great, quality literature to improve literacy and reading skills. It provides some useful approaches to different texts, with a focus on the joy, inspiration and creativity that can be found in the written word.

2. Who do you think would benefit most from reading the book? What will they learn?

Teachers who plan and teach reading and writing across primary and secondary schools would benefit from the resources that are available in this book. I have already used it myself when planning guided reading for Year 5, as it is full of ideas and resources (the sequence is almost planned for you!). More specifically, it is particularly useful for teachers who are teaching pupils who speak English as an additional language, as Cox's criteria for choosing texts has been that they support the need for greater knowledge of literature from the past and provide the scope needed for deeper learning and understanding in English - the idea behind it is that exposure to high-quality texts will improve knowledge and understanding of language and vocabulary.

3. What did you think about the quality of the writing? Please consider the tone, structure and ideas. Does it suit the audience?

A very useful tool written by a secondary teacher with busy teachers in mind (reader/teacher-friendly). One quality that I particularly like about the book is the way that Bob Cox has kept it tightly focused by using a few high-quality texts (a mixture of poetry and prose), but he has also managed to convey a passion for literature that is infectious!

4. Please discuss the research used to underpin the ideas. What evidence does the author use? Is it robust and up-to-date?

Bob Cox is an independent educational consultant, writer and teacher coach who works nationally and internationally to support outstanding learning. He has been working with a number of schools and local authorities to improve writing standards.

5. What did you learn from reading the book? What ideas/approaches/practice will you change or adopt as a result of reading this book?

This book (and the training I went on) has encouraged me to pay particular attention to the texts that I am choosing in the classroom. I have had a tendency to choose 'easier' texts for my pupils, as the majority of them speak English as an additional language, but Cox's book has highlighted the importance of supporting my class in making links between challenging texts in order to maximise the potential for quality writing. Cox emphasises that modelled writing can often limit progress, as it acts in a similar way to a 'straightjacket.' Ideas formed from great writing should be used as a starting point, and not an endgame. If my level of expectation rises, then hopefully the children's writing will in turn improve, as great writers will have caught the attention of and inspired them.

6. Could you share a quote from the book that particularly resonated with you?

At the heart of the *Opening Doors* concept is the need for the teachers to use literary texts as starting points for their own invention. That mindset is bound to spread to the pupils. They will be suggesting approaches too - and why not?