

What's out there

***My neighbourhood: literacy in context* by Jan Hagston**

Reviewed by Tracey Grimmer

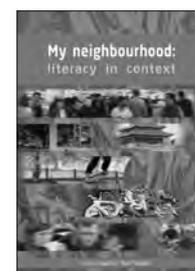
When leafing through the pages of *My neighbourhood: literacy in context*, there is something reassuringly familiar about the layout and some of the activities. For those of you who have been working in the field of literacy and numeracy for some time, I'm sure you will find this resource easy to relate to and straight away you will think of different ways to incorporate it into your classes.

In the introduction there is an honest recognition that the best way to develop literacy skills is through using them in context. There is also the recognition that this isn't a simple process and providing our students with opportunities that allow them to develop their skills within a *context* that suits them is a very real challenge. The resource recognises the incredible balancing act that the teacher has to achieve in order to meet the needs of all within their classroom—hallelujah!

The teacher information is easy to follow and includes ideas for facilitating each activity as well as materials required, skills sheets, suggestions, additional resources, assessment suggestions and even possibilities for extension work. The activities encourage the use of technology but also acknowledge the varying levels of IT skills that can exist within a classroom and allow for this. There are also many suggestions of websites that can be used to support activities and provide models of tasks to inspire students.

In addition, there is a section within the introduction that maps the activities to various curricula. As this is a Melbourne publication the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), Certificates in General Education for Adults (CGEA), and the English component of the Australian Curriculum are all mapped. The mapping is a useful starting point and allows you to quickly see where the activities may sit in relation to your curriculum, but the author stresses that mapping should only be used as a guide as classrooms are very individual places.

Even though this is primarily a literacy resource, its strength is that it recognises literacy is never taught in isolation and while developing literacy skills a range of other skills are also being developed. There are activities that include numeracy, problem solving, oral communica-



tion, and computing skills. This supports the notion of concurrent skill development and allows teachers to take activities in a direction that suits the needs of students. It also allows for the situation where there are several streams and levels within the one classroom.

One activity that was particularly interesting and appealing to me was 'Activity 6: Literacy and numeracy in the community—a photo account'. I think this activity has great appeal for students who are less reluctant writers or who are visual learners or artistic. It encourages the students to engage with their own communities and find examples of text, numbers and graphics in use. It also encourages them to analyse what surrounds them in their everyday lives and possibly look at something that they may pass everyday but never really *see*. This activity allows students to be artistic with the presentation of their findings and encourages the use of technology for those who embrace IT and all it has to offer.

I found that Activity 6 ties in very nicely with Activity 7, where there is a focus on contractions. For example, when photographing signs in the neighbourhood in Activity 6, students could find instances of contractions; teachers could also expand the activity to include finding misspelt signs, which could be fun for the students to photograph.

The mapping, co-operative logic and numeracy skills involved in Activities 9 to 11 are well planned and easy to follow and have considered literacy teachers who may feel less comfortable when incorporating numeracy concepts into their classrooms. For those of you who have used Dave Tout's resources before, these activities will be easy to relate to. There are also references to additional resources.

Finally, as we approach the end of the resource we find the set of sheets referred to as *skill sheets*. These sheets aim to support the development of skills needed by students in

order to undertake the tasks in the resource. The sheets cover a range of tasks: grammar, report writing, finding averages in numeracy, tips on using the Internet. It is easy to see how they would support the activities very nicely.

The only difficulty or challenge that I could foresee with developing a unit of work with a *neighbourhood* focus is that sometimes it is difficult to promote a sense of community or even find common ground with a group of students, especially if they are a geographically diverse group. Some students have moved often and have disconnected from their communities so may find it difficult to engage with the activities, although I recognise that this resource is trying to address that very issue.

Page Turners Series

***Running with Boats* and *Cyclone Tracey* by Anne Dunn and illustrations by Moira Hanrahan**

Reviewed by Janette Platt

These two titles are well-designed readers for beginning adult readers, particularly men. The two readers present interesting, adult-appropriate stories in a humorous manner. The text is a good size font for the beginning reader with the right amount of text for each level. My students found the books easy and enjoyable to read.

The story of *Running with Boats* is a level one reader and is excellent for men with beginning reading skills. About boats and travel, the story is quite *blokey* yet interesting and humorous. The story develops the idea of travel and visiting new places and provided the opportunity for discussion about Australia, the states and territories, map reading and holidays. The illustrations support the text well.

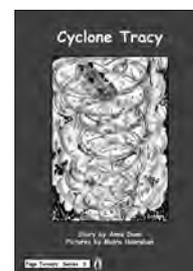
Cyclone Tracey is a level three reader that includes a good range of vocabulary to challenge readers. The story is interesting and factual and allows the adult reader to empathise with the participants in the story. The fact that it is about an event that most Australians are familiar with aids reading. *Cyclone Tracey* is an excellent story for promoting class discussion and could include an Internet search to gain more information about the event.

The Page Turners readers have extension and discussion activities. These activities could be built upon to provide many lessons in vocabulary, grammar, discussion, reading

Overall, I found *My neighbourhood: literacy in context* got me thinking about activities I could introduce to students to inspire them, and that is what I look for in a resource.

To obtain a copy of *My neighbourhood: literacy in context* go to www.multifangled.com.au or email multif@multifangled.com.au.

Tracy Grimmer is a staff member at Chisholm Institute and has taught all levels of the CGEA. For the past five years she has been part of the Chisholm team developing Individual Learning Centres with a bank of resources focussed on Certificates II and III in General Education for Adults.



and writing. Another excellent addition to these readers is a complete list of words used in the text of the reader. This list could be used in preparation for reading or group writing if using a collaborative writing method.

These two books are an excellent addition to the popular Page Turners series and will be favourites in any adult reading and writing programme.

Running with Boats and *Cyclone Tracey*, and other Page Turner readers are available from Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education, <<http://pageturners.prace.vic.edu.au>> or email office@prace.vic.edu.au

Janette Platt has been a literacy and numeracy practitioner for many years and manages an adult reading and writing programme in Mackay, Central Queensland. She advocates for empowering adults to be independent and self-directed learners in all aspects of their lives. Janette has worked as a workplace based enterprise teacher, prison education officer, a TAFE literacy and numeracy teacher and most recently a community literacy programme manager.