

# Integrating Literature into the Curriculum



At Nord Anglia International School Hong Kong, we strive to develop in our pupils a love of reading through widespread exposure to quality books. Our well-resourced library ensures our pupils have access to rich and varied texts which aim to feed their imagination, whilst opening their minds to the wonders and joys that reading can bring.

As an English co-ordinator, I have always invested time in selecting age-appropriate and well-written texts that inspire reading and writing for enjoyment. I believe that studying texts in greater depth allows pupils to see how language works in context and can be a route into quality writing.

In my experience, choosing a suitable text is key to integrating literature successfully into the curriculum. Wyse and Jones (2008) explain that although the quality of any book may be a matter of opinion, there are some suggested boxes to tick in looking for a quality children's text to use in the classroom. The authors propose examining the following: 'Is it interesting and engaging? Does it link to meaningful experiences? Is there suitable challenge? Does the author have a distinctive voice? What potential learning opportunities does the book offer and is there an effective structure?'

In our Primary school, we aim to integrate quality literature into our curriculum. This includes wonderful poems, thought provoking picture

books, contemporary books and some texts from literary heritage. Through this approach, year groups choose a text that provides a hook into the Theme or whereby the text drives an English genre being taught. In Year 4, our recent theme was the Amazon Rainforest. Our chosen text was, 'The Great Kapok Tree' by Lynn Cherry. In English, the children learnt about the author's varied use of language which supported their grammatical understanding - connections were also made to how rainforests are under threat. The class then wrote their own rainforest dilemma stories which featured many of the language patterns exemplified in the story. In *Opening Doors to Quality Writing*, Bob Cox (2016) explains that in using quality texts, 'You should find the level of expectation goes up and, with it, the children's writing should become more quirky, creative and unusual - after all, it's great writers who have inspired the class!' In this way, the text was at the heart of our curriculum and allowed pupils to transfer knowledge and skills from English to other subjects.

A text-based approach to the curriculum is supported by research conducted by James Clements in *Teaching English By the Book* (2018), who suggests that, 'A rich text-based curriculum does more than help children to become better readers and writers. Sharing great books gives children the opportunity to encounter new language and ideas, broadening their horizons and helping them to think about something in a different way. Great texts give children a model for expressing themselves clearly in speech and writing, building an understanding of how language can be shaped for a particular purpose or audience.' In our ever digital world, I ask you to consider how quality books can support your curriculum?

You can find more support for working on texts with your students in the Global Campus area of NAU under [Global Library](#) and also in this set of seminars by James Clements which you can find in the [Seminar Series](#) section of NAU.



**Hannah Haines**

Year 4 class teacher and NAU Teaching Fellow  
Nord Anglia International School Hong Kong