

Litty-gritty: reading as a non-cognitive skill

Edmund Dudley

IATEFL Hungary Creative Cafes November 2019

Litty-gritty: reading as a non-cognitive skill

In this talk

- Extensive reading: worth the effort?
- Reading as a non-cognitive skill
- Materials, methods and ideas

Litty-gritty: reading as a non-cognitive skill

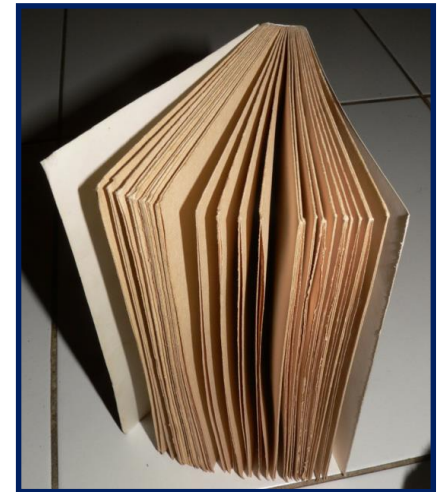
In this talk

- **Extensive reading: worth the effort?**
- Reading as a non-cognitive skill
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Extensive reading

Worth the effort?

- the value of extensive reading
- the reluctance of students to read
- how we can get students to read more



the value of extensive reading

multiple benefits, key conditions

- reading
- vocabulary
- writing
- oral fluency
- attitude towards English
- motivation

important conditions:
ease
variety
choice
amount

Richard R Day

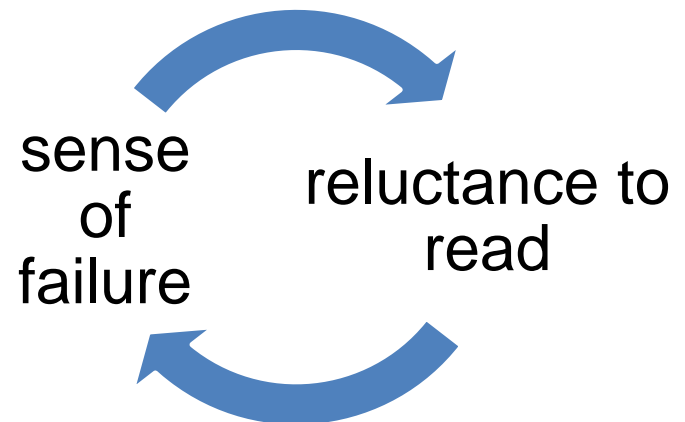
<https://oupeltglobalblog.com/2017/01/11/extensive-reading-and-language-learning/>

the reluctance of students to read

Many readers today

- find reading difficult and/or boring
- get distracted easily
- have short attention spans
- expect instant gratification (tl;dr)

→ a vicious cycle



how we can get students to read more

I use a pragmatic approach which acknowledges the lack of “pleasure” in reading-for-pleasure

- work on developing positive habits
- provide opportunities to conquer obstacles to reading
- shape future attitudes towards reading by planting seeds (and walking away)

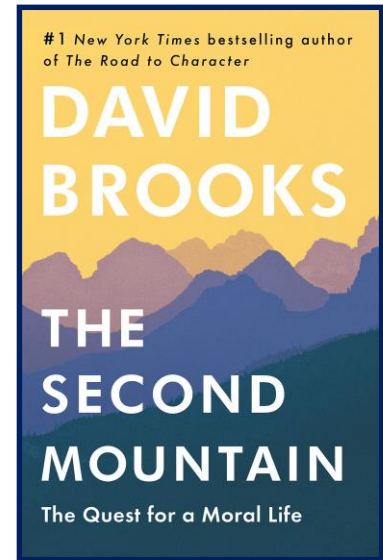


Reading is a value as well as a skill

“The best teachers don’t give us information...they give us knowledge of *what is worth wanting*.”

David Brooks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PertBYAnQok>



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Further benefits...

...that are not linked to language learning

Reading – even in short bursts – improves:

- mood
- attention span
- awareness

...and reduces:

- anxiety
- FOMO



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the value of extensive reading
multiple benefits, key conditions

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Reading as a non-cognitive skill

- rain or shine?
- the benefits of approaching reading as a chore
- developing resilience and grit through reading



How do you turn a reluctant bather into a regular swimmer?
Answer coming up...

Rain or shine?



When rain is forecast, there are four options

Which one would you advise?

- Ignore it
get soaked
- Escape it
get away
- Rage about it
get an ulcer
- Accept it
get an umbrella



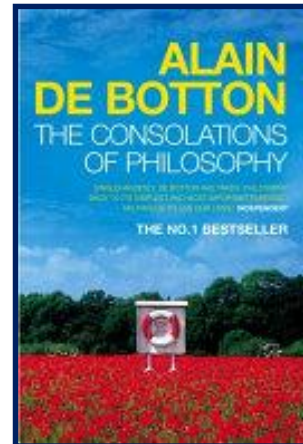
According to the Stoic philosophers, anger and frustration are caused by having expectations which are **too high**



“We will cease to be so angry once we cease to be so hopeful”

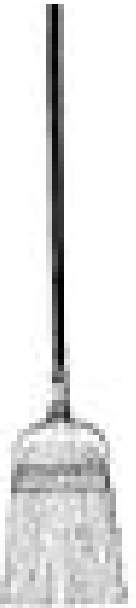
Alain de Botton *The Consolations of Philosophy*

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The benefits of approaching reading as a chore

- chores are necessary
- they have positive consequences
- we do not expect to enjoy carrying them out
- we become skilled at the chores we do regularly



Reading survey

Part 1

- When in your life did you spend the most time reading?
- Did you read more when you were twenty or do you read more now?
- What accounts for the differences?
- Would you like (ideally) to spend more time reading?
- Why (not)?



Reading survey

Part 2

You're reading a book. After about 20 pages you realise that you're not enjoying it.

What do you do?

- a) Stop reading it and start a new book
- b) Come back to it later (next month, next year...)
- c) Read it through to the end

Why?

Reasons to finish the books you start

Here are the difficulties:

- I'm not enjoying it
- I'm tired
- I'm distracted
- There's no time

Here are the solutions:

- Don't read to enjoy;
read to read
- Just five more pages
- Airplane mode
- Read instead of ...

Developing resilience and grit through reading

resilience and grit:

- non-cognitive skills
- can be learned and developed
- hard to teach!
- require deliberate practice
- manifest themselves in attitudes and behaviour (effort)

Grit

The importance of effort

Two components:

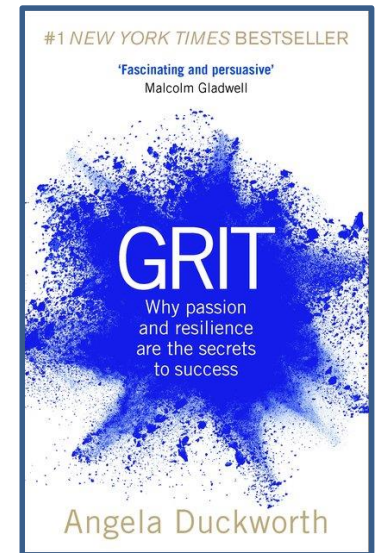
passion (staying focused)

perseverance (bouncing back from setbacks)

talent x **effort** = skill

skill x **effort** = achievement

Angela Duckworth *Grit*



In at the deep end?

How do you turn a reluctant bather into a regular swimmer?



If you throw them in, they'll climb straight out

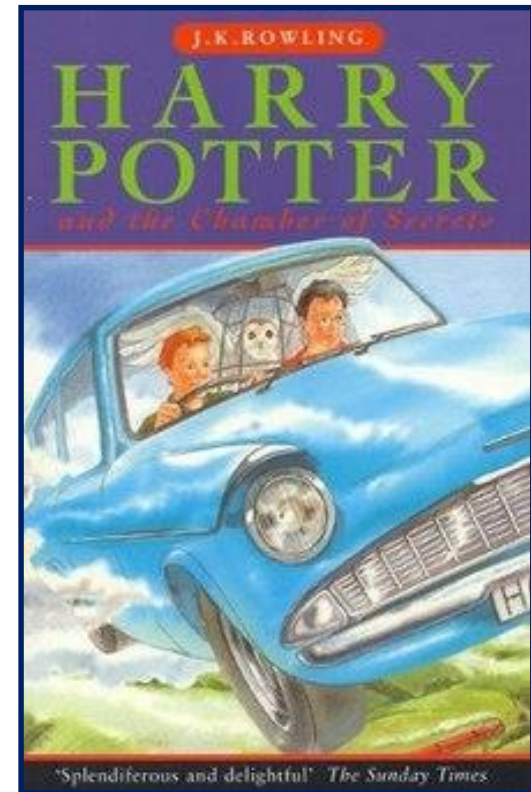
- Set shallow-end tasks
- Aim for perseverance, not enjoyment
- Let people find their own way to the deep end

What did Dumbledore say to Harry?

Was he right?

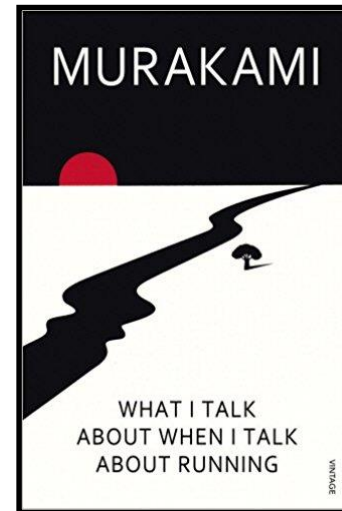
It is our **choices**, Harry,
that show what we truly are,
far more than our abilities.

*Harry Potter and the Chamber
of Secrets*



Why suffer?

“Pain is inevitable.
Suffering is optional.”



Haruki Murakami - *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running*

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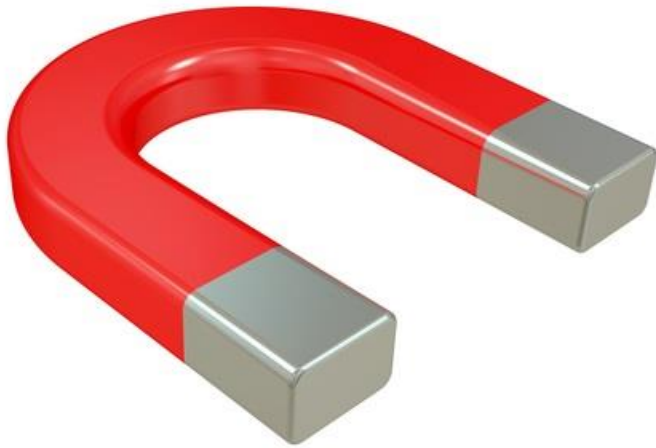
- Extensive reading: worth the effort?
- Reading as a non-cognitive skill
- **Materials, methods and ideas**

Materials, methods and ideas

- materials: **graded readers** and **extracts from original works**
- methods: **reading as a chore**; **magnet and hook**
- ideas: DEAR; post-it reviews; spot the difference; predict and recall; comparing covers; first line tasks, Franklin dictogloss

Method for promoting reading habits

Magnet and hook



DEAR

Drop Everything And Read

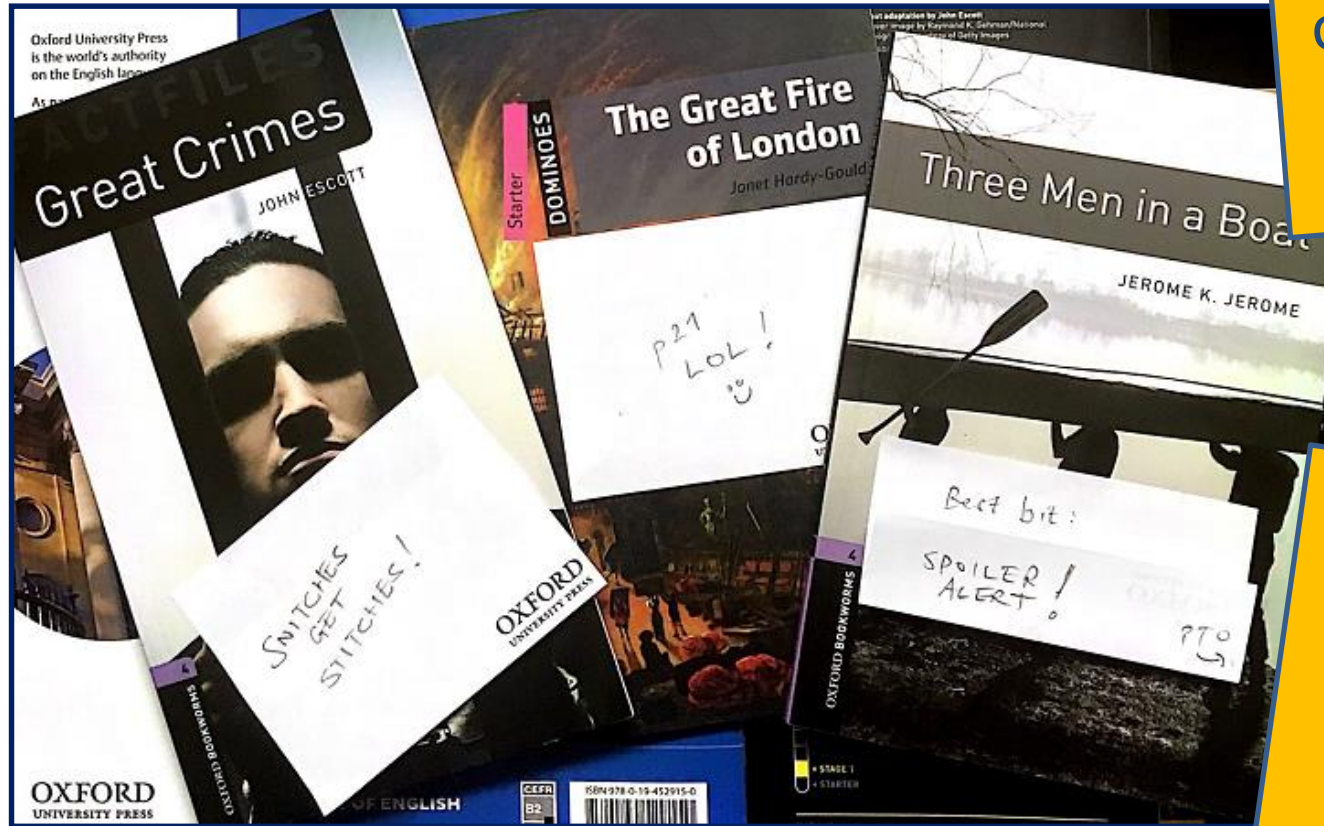
find time for individual reading in class

make it communal and unstructured

e.g. selection of graded readers

value perseverance and effort → *joint hardship* (Dörnyei)

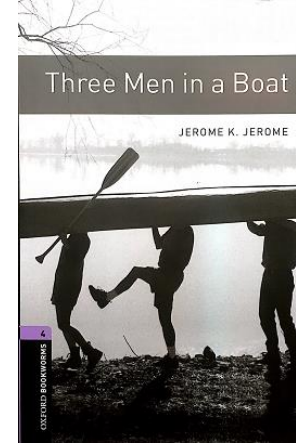
Post-It reviews



short reviews
or comments

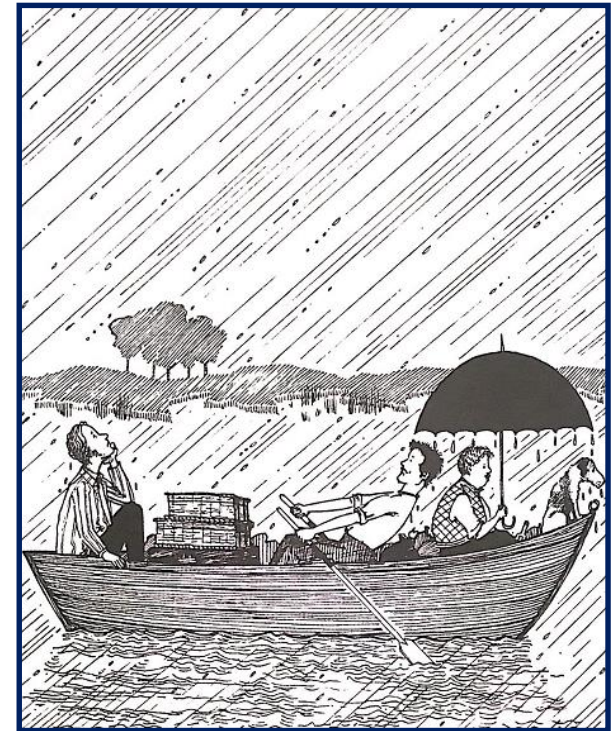
left on the
cover or
inside the
book

Spot the difference



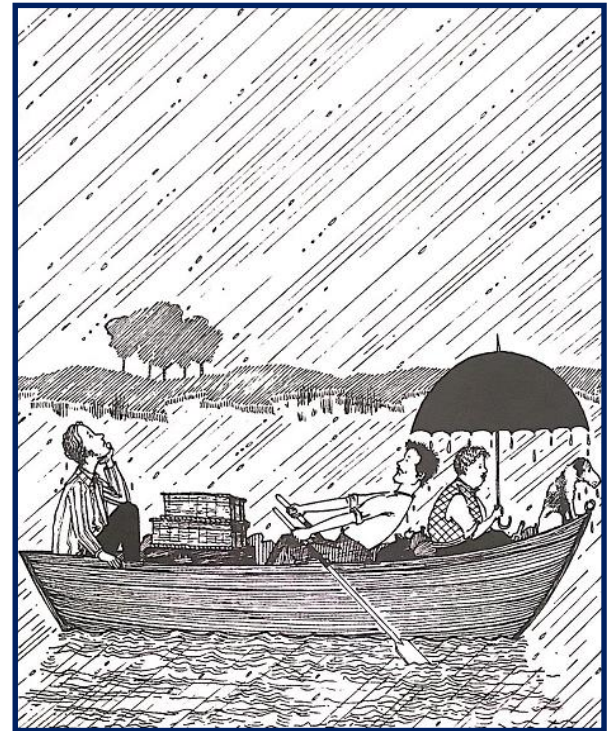
We had come to enjoy ourselves for a fortnight on the river, and we were going to finish the trip. If it killed us – well, that would be a sad thing for our friends and families, but we would not give in to the weather.

“It’s only two more days,” Harris said, “and we are young and strong. Perhaps we’ll be all right.”

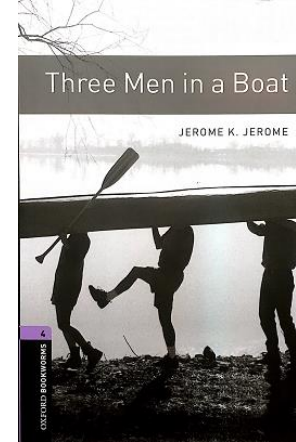


Spot the difference

1. Read the text aloud, or get students to read it quietly to read it quietly
2. Focus their attention on the vocabulary used in the text. Elicit synonyms.
3. Remove the text from view.
4. Re-read, replacing one lexical item with an appropriate synonym.
5. Can students identify the change?

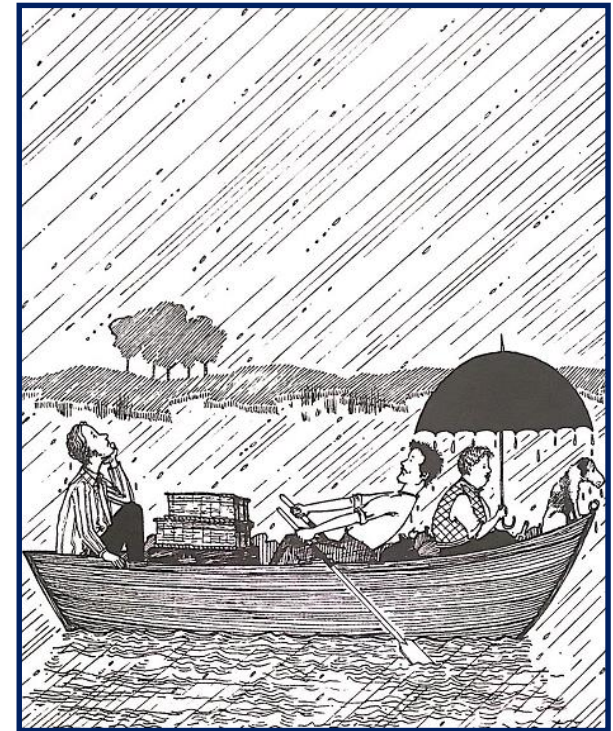


Spot the difference



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“It’s only two more days,” Harris said, “and we are **fit** and strong. Perhaps we’ll be all right.”

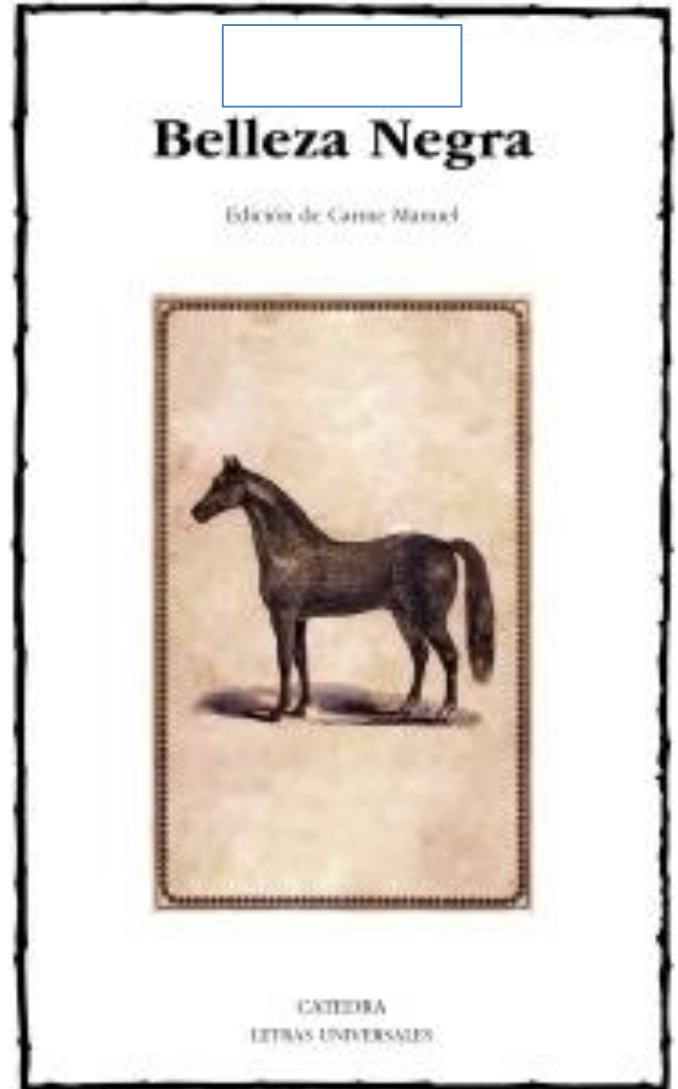


Foreign-language covers

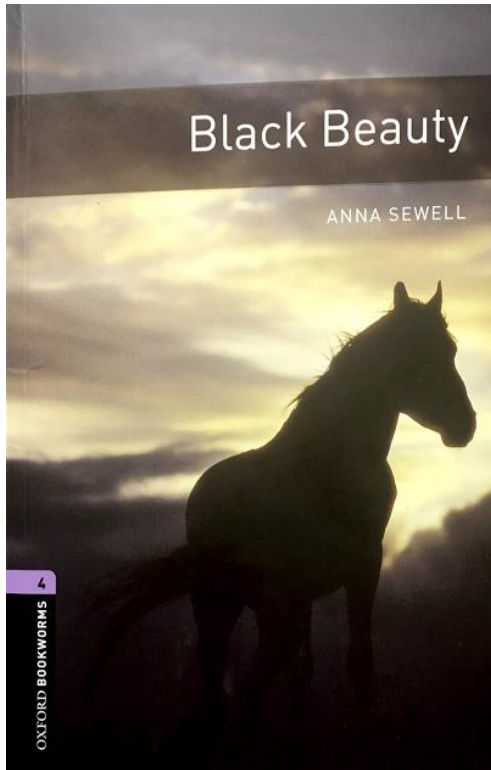
Search for a foreign-language cover of a book you would like to focus on

Can you guess the English title of the book?

What language do you think this version is in?



Comparing covers

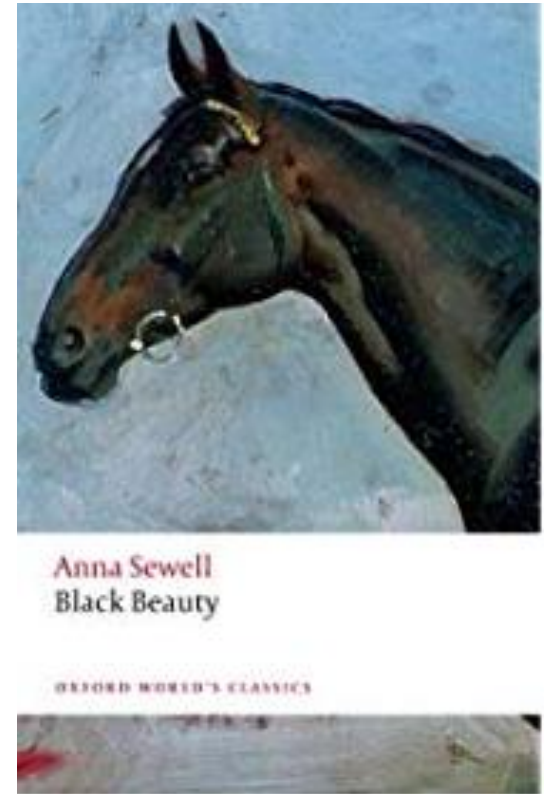


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Working in pairs, find:

- two differences
- two similarities

Which version would you prefer to read? Why



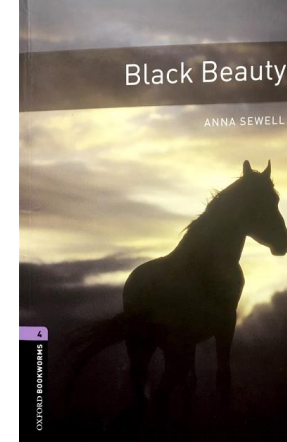
Predict and recall

- look at the illustration
- predict vocabulary



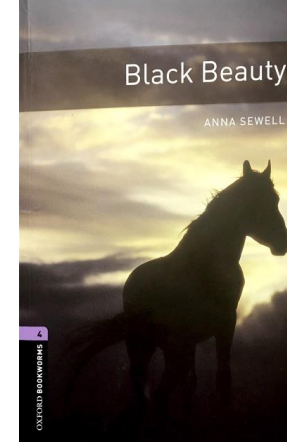
Predict and recall

- look at the illustration
- predict vocabulary
- check



*T*he first place I can remember well was a pleasant field with a pond of clear water in it. Trees made shadows over the pond, and water plants grew at the deep end. On one side was another field, and on the other side we looked over a gate at our master's house, which stood by the roadside. At the top of our field were more tall trees, and at the bottom was a fast-running stream.

Predict and recall



- look at the illustration
- predict vocabulary
- check
- translate → L1

The first place I can remember well was a pleasant field with a pond of clear water in it. Trees made shadows over the pond, and water plants grew at the deep end. On one side was another field, and on the other side we looked over a gate at our master's house, which stood by the roadside. At the top of our field were more tall trees, and at the bottom was a fast-running stream.



**TWO WEEKS
LATER...**

Predict and recall

- look at the illustration
- predict vocabulary
- check
- translate → L1
- translate back into English

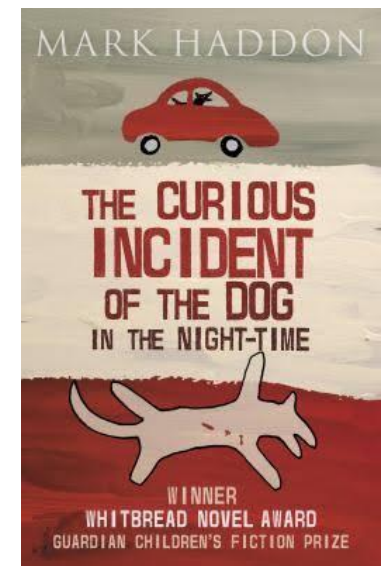
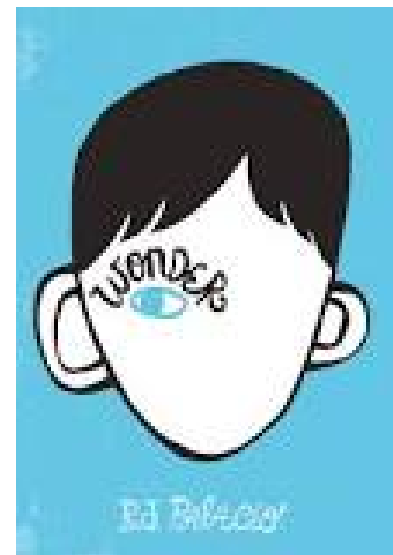
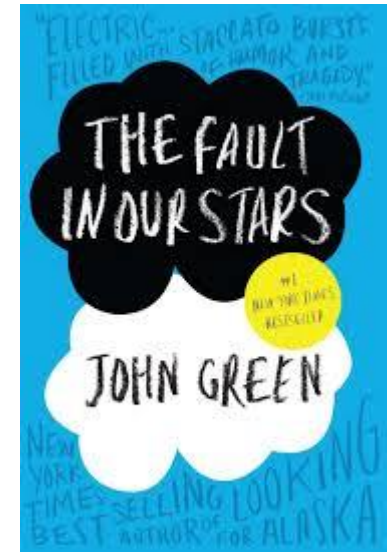


First-line tasks

Guess the book

“Late in the winter of my seventeenth year, my mother decided I was depressed, presumably because I rarely left the house, spent quite a lot of time in bed, read the same book over and over, ate infrequently, and devoted quite a bit of my abundant free time to thinking about death.”

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First-line tasks

Write the line

1. Give students small pieces of paper
2. They write an opening sentence
3. Collect the papers
4. Read them all out (including the original)
5. Vote for your favourite



The Adventures of Tom Sawyer



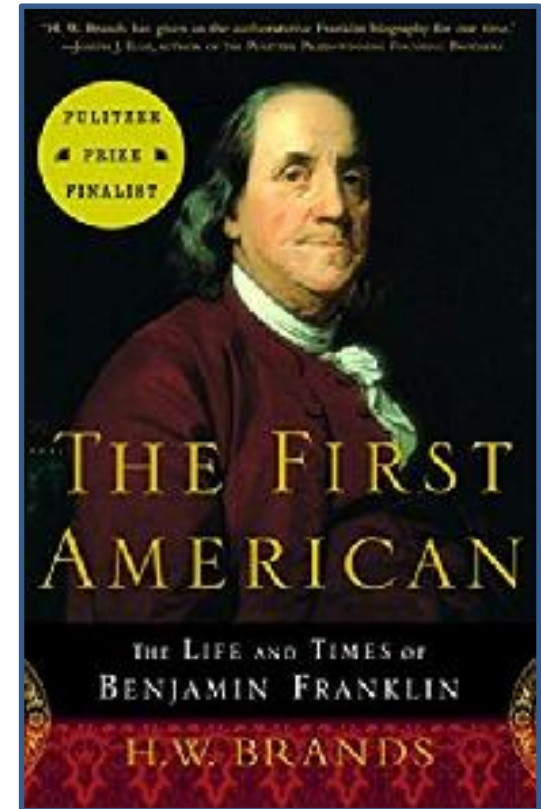
Tom Sawyer does not like school. He does not like work, and he never wants to get out of bed in the morning. But he likes swimming and fishing, and having adventures with his friends. And he has a lot of adventures. One night, he and his friend Huck Finn go to the graveyard to look for ghosts.

They don't see any ghosts that night. They see something worse than a ghost – much, much worse . . .

[Word count 5,825]

How Ben Franklin taught himself to write

- highlighted passages from the essays he enjoyed in *The Spectator*
- took notes
- used the notes to create poetry(!)
- translated the poems back into prose (without checking the original)
- analysed his prose by comparing it to the original *Spectator* passages



Questions

pre-reading

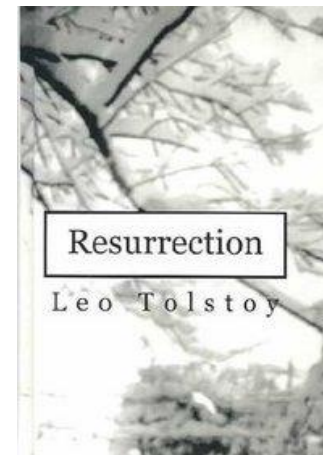
1. What are three things that you can treat without love?
2. When is love needed?
3. What do bees need?
4. How are bees and people similar?

Text

extract from a classic

Things may be treated without love; one may chop wood, make bricks, forge iron without love, but one can no more deal with people without love than one can handle bees without care. The nature of bees is such that if you handle them carelessly you will harm them as well as yourself; it is the same with people.

Leo Tolstoy – *Resurrection* loc 5050



Questions reviewed



1. What are three things that you can treat without love?

(chop) wood, (make) bricks, (forge) iron

2. When is love needed?

when dealing with people

3. What do bees need?

careful handling

4. How are bees and people similar?

you will hurt them – and yourself – if you handle them carelessly



Recreate
the
original
text

into the **CLASSROOM**

Literature

Amos Paran and Pauline Robinson

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