

REVIEWS

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*Teaching Teenagers:
Unlocking Potential
in the Young Adult Classroom*

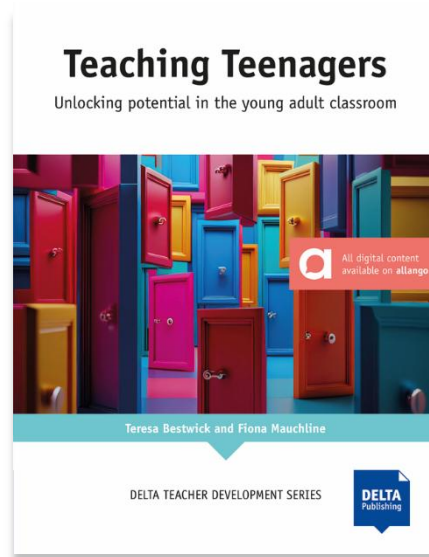
Teresa Bestwick and Fiona Mauchline

Teacher Development Series

DELTA Publishing, 2024

Pp. 164

ISBN 9783125017733



Fresh Perspectives on a Tricky Age Group

Straight off the CELTA, armed with enthusiasm, and ready to conquer the classroom—then reality hits. Your first class is a group of teenagers, and the material is from *Headway*, a coursebook written for adults, featuring a text about an older woman failing her driving test. Not exactly riveting stuff for a bunch of 16-year-olds, and they let you know all about it. This was my story, anyway. I had wrongly assumed I could teach this age group like the adults on the training course. I had little idea about teenage motivation or activities that might work, let alone what to do when everything disintegrates into chaos. And this is exactly where Teresa Bestwick and Fiona Mauchline's *Teaching Teenagers* could have made a huge difference.

This book is essential reading for any teacher of teenagers or teacher educator. It's divided into three parts, and you'll want to read all of them in that order.

Part A: Teaching Teenagers – Silver Bullets, Wooden Spoons, and Other Gadgets

Despite the title, the authors make it clear: there's no magic wand for teaching teenagers. What they do offer, though, is a treasure trove of insights into how teens learn, what drives their behaviour, and why they act like they're allergic to authority. You'll find yourself nodding along as Fiona Mauchline recounts teaching her son to drive: a brilliant metaphor for how teenage learning is more about creating the right conditions and building effective connections in the brain than about memorizing facts.

From understanding teenage risk-taking to harnessing their wish to 'fit in,' this part of the book sets you up with a solid theoretical foundation. Scattered throughout this

section are 'pause for thought' moments that prompt you to stop, think, and apply the ideas to your own teaching practice. Don't miss the checklist of ten ingredients for a successful lesson with teenagers at the end of this part: it's the kind of advice you'll keep coming back to.

Part B: Practical Activities for the Teenage Classroom

Once you've read up on the theoretical background, it's time to dive into Part B, the heart of the book. This section is a veritable toolkit, brimming with practical activities ready to implement in your classroom. Whether you're looking to build confidence and community in a new class or need fresh ideas for using media, projects, or other materials, this section has you covered.

Chapter 1 is extremely useful: it's packed with activities perfect for those daunting first few classes. And the best part? Each activity comes with clear instructions, suggested timings, and information on materials, appropriate ages and levels. Chapter 7 focuses on teenage learning. Two standouts for me here are the 'Big Frog' activity, which helps students prioritize tasks, and 'Doodle Notes,' a creative way to make texts more memorable through visual representation. The beauty of Part B lies in its flexibility: mix and match activities from different chapters and see what works with your learners.

Part C: Next Steps for Continuing Growth

Now that you've equipped yourself with both theory and practical tools, and you've tried some of them out in the classroom, you may have encountered some issues. Part C identifies some of the most common ones, including, 'What do I do about phones in class?' or 'What should I do with a class that has gotten out of control?' The authors provide plenty of reassurance in this section and link their sound advice back to the practical ideas in Part B. They also include more 'pause for thought' questions.

The second section of Part C encourages both teacher self-reflection and social reflection (sharing reflections with colleagues). My particular favourite is the 'reflective pizza.' I'll let you discover this activity for yourself once you get hold of a copy of the book.

There are a few extra worksheets and templates on the [Allango](#) language learning platform. You'll need to create an account to access these.

Final Thoughts

Teaching Teenagers is a valuable resource for anyone involved in teaching teenagers or even in training teachers of teenagers. With its mix of theory, practical activities, and reflections, it's essential reading for anyone looking to connect with and inspire their teenage students—or, in the authors' words, 'unlock potential in the young adult classroom.'



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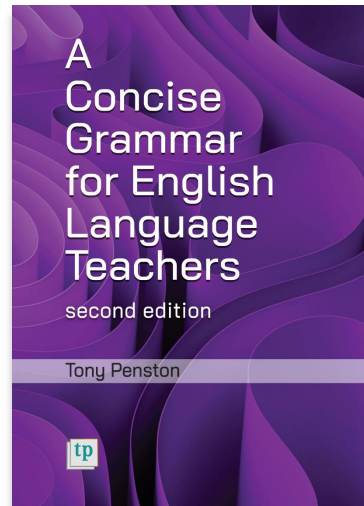
*A Concise Grammar
for English Language Teachers
2nd edition*

Tony Penston

TP Publications, 2024

Pp. 184

ISBN 978-0-9531323-8-6



As an English teacher, I have always been fond of grammar books, perhaps because I could find the 'why...? and because' of the language there.

A Concise Grammar for English Language Teachers is a practical and useful resource that novice and experienced teachers need to have. The purpose is simple: making grammar teaching simple, easy and enjoyable.

Some aspects that caught my attention were the A4 size, rare for grammar books, and the use of colour and attractive graphs, tree diagrams, charts, and tables to exemplify grammar rules. I consider that of great help for people who value visual input.

As with the first edition, the objectives remain unchanged: the second edition aims to offer the essentials of ELT grammar in a user-friendly manner. This second edition also includes activities that require very little preparation as well as exercises and examples from well-known online providers and course books, intended to clarify the points.

What can you find in this new edition? Organization

The second edition of *A Concise Grammar for English Language Teachers* is available only as a print version. Its 184 pages begin with a table of contents that enumerates the topics covered, and an introduction stating relevant aspects of grammar, its teaching as well as new features. The main grammar points are organized in 31 chapters.



The book includes a list of common abbreviations (for example, adj., adv., L2, prep.); terminology such as 'collocation' or 'verb/phrase' and symbols such as an asterisk * to indicate something ungrammatical. All of these serve as a reference for teachers with advanced knowledge of language, but not necessarily of grammatical terms.

The appendix of level guidance at the back of the book displays the main grammatical contents and a few functions, such as greetings making suggestions or requests, that according to CEFR levels (from A 1 to C1-2) are covered in most coursebooks. Novice teachers may find this guide a valuable indicator of what learners are expected to produce at each level.

A feature I consider important in ELT which is not generally found in grammar books, is a section devoted to English phonemes. Teaching phonology is not easy if the teacher, whether a native or non-native speaker of English, has not received formal instruction on the matter. It is important to help learners produce sounds accurately. The section includes a chart of English consonant phonemes, not only the phonetic symbol, but also the point of articulation for each consonant sound. Additionally, diagrams of the mouth and areas of difficulty in the production of some sounds are shown. It also displays graphs for the production of back or front vowel phonemes, both for the General British and General American variations, together with examples and the position of the lips.

The Key section reproduces most tables and charts which allows better explanations. The use of colours in this section makes it easier to spot the relevant information.

The last section, the Index, offers a detailed reference of the points covered, either a chapter, a task, or a teaching note. These last two, are easily identified with a colour.

Content: what is in every unit?

A Concise Grammar for English Language Teachers is organized into 31 units that cover a wide range of grammatical points, from the structure of simple sentences, and tenses to types of words, and from simple functions to more advanced topics.

The layout of each unit displays a well-designed use of pastel colours to identify its components, diagrams, tables and charts.

Each unit covers a grammar point, and usually begins with a short definition. All the aspects of the grammar point merit a subheading and are abundantly exemplified with:

- a short description or explanation,
- short texts, in the case of tenses, to present them in context in green,
- sentences or tree diagrams with the grammar point highlighted,
- detailed tables or charts with the relevant information written in bold in light blue,
- drawings with a touch of humour,
- well-documented examples from various ELT sources.

Explanations are not usually very long, but to-the-point. They do not need to be complicated. They may simply describe the differences between British and American usage, which can be of value to learners.

Several easy-to-complete tasks are also included in every unit. Tasks are short activities designed for teachers to reflect on what they know, and how they should teach or approach each point. They comprise a variety of both written and oral exercises: answering a question to reflect on the grammar, putting statements in order, matching parts, identifying and explaining errors, drawing timelines, completing a chart, filling in the blanks, and stating uses through a drawing as a springboard.

Another component of each unit is the "Teaching Notes" section, clearly identified with the number of the unit and in yellow. The notes are clear, to-the-point, valuable tips for teachers. The notes show what teachers should know, and how they should guide learners. Notes can include suggestions on how to approach a grammar explanation, examples of mistakes L1 learners usually make, how to deal with these mistakes, and differences between English grammar and other languages. Furthermore, recommendations are offered regarding when it is necessary to teach grammar, and when it is not. I consider the "Teaching Notes" section a useful resource, especially for novice teachers, on how to approach grammar teaching.

Activities, in pastel red, are the final component in each unit. They are easy to use, take almost no preparation time, and require hardly any material, just the board; some copying might be necessary.

Activities, both written and oral, are divided into different stages: presentation: generally, through brainstorming, teacher reading a short passage, drawing on the board, or giving a clue; free practice: students write or talk in pairs or groups; variation, and wrap up: drawing conclusions, commenting on findings and fixing errors.

Final thoughts

A Concise Grammar for English Language Teachers is an excellent, user-friendly reference book for novice and more experienced teachers. It covers the main grammar areas for CEFR level standards providing practical examples from well-known print and online ELT materials. It goes beyond grammar since it includes phonological aspects, differences between learners, and comments on native speakers' use of the language.

Some takeaways from *A Concise Grammar for English Language Teachers*:

- an example of the benefits of teaching context, visuals and collocations,
- graphic explanations for some troublesome topics such as maximisers and degree adverbs,
- tips on teaching phrasal verbs,
- common errors native speakers make with past forms,
- a whole unit devoted to error analysis and correction and how to deal with errors.

Some key distinctive features:

- Teaching notes that offer practical, to-the-point advice,
- a large number of ready-to-use activities,
- thought-provoking tasks to aid teachers with explanations.

A Concise Grammar for English Language Teachers is not just a book about grammar rules. It is a source of teaching methods and ideas. Highly recommended!



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Short Tales: Penny Hen Goes Away, Fleecy Sheep Goes on Holiday, The Flying Carpet

I have had the opportunity to read and review three stories from *Short Tales*, a 6-level series by Express Publishing. The books represent three different levels, but share the same structure, which makes it easy for teachers, students and parents to work with them. Each tale is divided into two sections: the story and the activities, with a word list, and key structures at the end.

Story and illustrations

The stories are beautifully illustrated and apart from the text, which increases in length as the level progresses, each page has a question, either about the illustrations, or the text. This adds to the book's interest and interactivity, and piques students' curiosity, hopefully encouraging them to come up with their own questions.

Activities, CLIL, and crafts

At the end of each book, there is a variety of activities related to each part of the story: vocabulary, listening and pronunciation exercises, gap-filling exercises, a CLIL activity and my personal favourite: a craft related to the story. The latter can be used before or after reading to enhance interaction. Crafts provide an enjoyable way to practise English while having fun as children really enjoy them. All the crafts are thoroughly explained, listing the necessary materials and accompanied by step-by-step drawings, making them easy to follow. Moreover, they are also cost-effective, and can be re-used whenever re-visiting the story.

Audios and answer keys

Downloadable audios and answer keys are also provided. Additionally, for those more inclined towards technology, access to the *DigiBooks App* is available, allowing readers to both read and/or listen to the stories, and complete the exercises online with automatic corrections. This feature could be particularly useful for schools and language centres, as it provides an option for parents to engage in extra practice with their children at home.

Penny Hen Goes Away

Short Tales Level 1

Jenny Dooley and Virginia Dooley

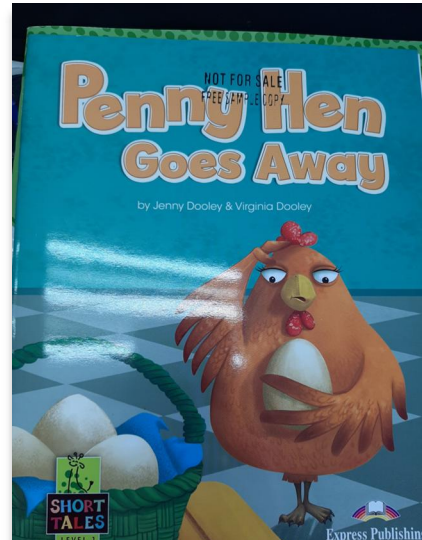
Express Publishing, 2023

Pp. 24

ISBN 978-1-3992-1016-4

Headwords: 71

Key structures and vocabulary: the verb *to be*, present simple, present continuous, *can/can't*, *please*, *I'm (very/really) sorry*



This book will help students improve their creativity and develop their problem-solving skills. Penny Hen is going away, but she has a problem: she cannot take her eggs, and she does not know what to do with them. She then asks her friends for help, but none seem to be free to babysit them, so she keeps trying to find a solution.

Although I must confess, I expected more from the solution she found, I really like the fact that the book encourages children to keep looking for a solution even when there seems to be none. As the final sentence suggests: "When there is a problem, think very hard. There is a way somehow!" (page 15).

The CLIL activity is about animals and their babies which suits the topic of the book, and can be used to talk about families and the animal world. The craft is making your own paper hen, using just scissors, glue, markers and coloured cards: a lot of fun!

Fleecy Sheep Goes on Holiday

Short Tales Level 4

Katherine Reilly and Jenny Dooley

Express Publishing, 2023

Pp. 24

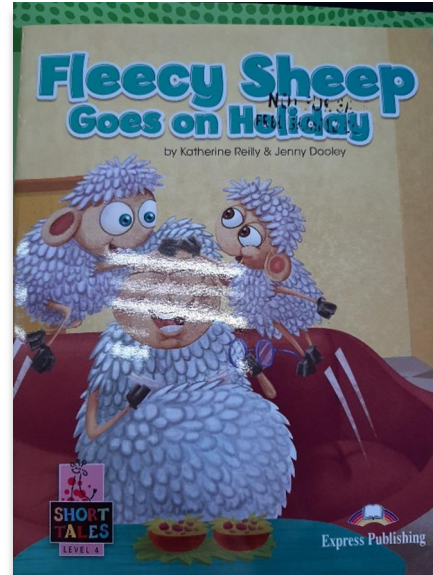
ISBN 978-1-3992-1070-6

Headwords: 204

Key structures and vocabulary:

can/can't, will/won't,

imperative, weather words, adjectives
about feelings.



This story is my absolute favourite! One of the sweetest I have read, and the illustrations are just the cutest!

The super sweet Fleecy Sheep always gives her friends her wool for winter so that they can protect themselves from the cold. However, one day, while she is showing her two children some photos of Antarctica, where one of her friends lives, they ask her to travel there. This year she will need all her wool for her family. She will have to tell her friends, but she does not know how. She does not want to disappoint them or to make them angry. One by one she talks to them. To her surprise, not only do they totally understand, but they also want to give her something for her trip. They want to thank her for all her help over the years.

I highly recommend this book, which speaks about empathy, helping your friends and caring about each other. Doesn't the world need more of this? And as the book says: "When you give to others there is always a time, they will give back to you" (page 15).

The CLIL activity this time is about the weather, which is perfect for the story, and could even be done before reading it. The craft is another favourite of mine: making a model sheep, using a card tube (a toilet paper tube is perfect for this), black card, googly eyes (you can also use cardboard), white wool, glue and scissors.

The Flying Carpet

Short Tales level 6

Katherine Reilly and Jenny Dooley

Express Publishing, 2023

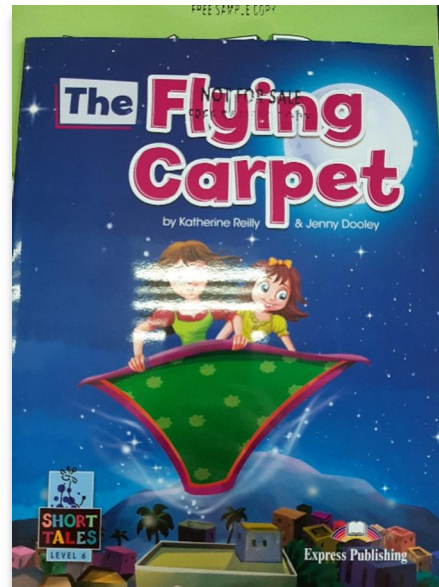
Pp. 24

ISBN 978-1-3992-1106-2

Headwords: 338

Key structures and vocabulary:
comparatives,

superlatives, *too/enough*, types of
homes, household chores



Two sisters, Susan, who is very sweet and caring, and her younger sister, Sandy, who dreams about becoming rich. They fly on a magic carpet to a palace in a faraway land where they meet the prince and his sick mother. Sandy pretends to be a princess, and that her sister is her maid. The prince has to go away, and Sandy says Susan will take care of his mother. While Susan helps the queen, she also gets to know her, and is happy to be taking care of her. On the other hand, Sandy only cares about dresses, and telling the servants what to do. She just wants to marry the prince, become a real princess, and be rich. She thinks Susan is a fool for doing all the chores without complaining. Susan really likes the queen, and feels really bad for lying to her, so she decides to tell her the truth. The queen rewards her honesty with a gold bracelet. When the prince returns, his mother tells him all about Susan. He says she is "a good and caring girl" that she "should be a princess," and decides to marry her.

I really enjoyed the theme of the story, speaking about generosity and selfishness. The only downside I see is that some people may not consider marrying a prince you do not know a reward. Two of my favourite quotes are: "Money doesn't bring happiness. The people we love do," (page 3), and "You always get what you deserve. Honesty and kindness get rewarded" (page 15).



The CLIL activity this time is about geography, and how to use different types of maps: a world map, a tourist map, an underground map, and a digital map. The craft is a bit more complicated than the others, but really original. Children make a flying carpet using felt, two pipe cleaners, glue, scissors and two or three miniature cushions.

I really enjoyed reading three stories all dealing with values which actively engage the reader thanks to the questions and crafts.



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