

Reach Out: Who? What? Where? When? Why?

Book Review by Norma Murray

REACH OUT. Series Editor: Trudy Linfield. Joan Donnelly (WHO? Student Book 1, \$2.50; Teacher Guide, \$4.25); Talma Addes (WHAT? Student Book 2, \$3.25; WHERE? Student Book 3, \$3.25; Teacher Guide 2/3, \$4.25); Marianthy McCarthy (WHEN? Student Book 4, \$3.95; Workbook 4, \$1.95; Teacher Guide 4/5, \$4.25); Linda Barker (WHY? Student Book 5, \$3.95; Workbook 5, \$1.95; Teacher Guide 4/5, \$4.25). New York: Collier Macmillan International, 1982.

To English teachers, wh-questions are nothing new. What is new, however, is Macmillan's use of them in their latest publication. Each one of journalism's famous five W's comprises a title for each of the five-level books of *Reach Out*, a new English as a second language series designed especially for children ages 4-12.

This series is indeed a welcome addition to the field of ESL for young children as the choice of materials has been, and continues to be very limited. Many school systems have been forced to spend considerable sums of money in the development of ESL materials for their students. This new series is quite complete and should prove interesting to students (K-7).

Materials which are included in the series, but which may be purchased separately, are the different level student books, their detailed companion teacher guides, cassette tapes, wallcharts for level one, and workbooks for students of levels four and five. For the amount of clear teaching information they provide—lesson materials, words and instructions for songs and games, and helpful hints for successful teaching techniques—these individual materials are a bargain. According to the authors, "each level offers 50-100 hours of instruction, written and tested by experienced ESOL teachers."

In an easy-to-handle 7" x 9" size, all student books are attractively laid out with colorful pictures around which student-teacher discussions are centered. Black and

white illustrations which the student can color are also included for variety in face content as well as for fostering student involvement in fun learning activities.

A Brief Look at the Five W's

Reach Out, Who?, student book 1, which doubles also as a workbook, features sixteen units which guide the beginning learner through a pre-reading and pre-writing level curriculum in which basic listening-speaking skills are developed. Except for the presence of a nameless cartoon character on each unit page who noticeably serves no particular purpose (the author suggests it be named and used as a referant in class discussions), the illustrations depict real situations which occur in a typical school day.

What?, the second level of *Reach Out*, in true spiral form, reviews the grammar and vocabulary presented in book 1. It then introduces the alphabet and the sounds associated with them in preparation for developing reading-writing skills. Also included are lessons on the numbers 1 through 10.

Where? presupposes that the young learner has had at least six months of English study. This third level book emphasizes the relationship of phonemes to graphemes and provides realistic contexts spanning ten units in response to the title question.

When?, a twelve-unit student book with a separate workbook, is for those students who have a "working knowledge of English," since they will be required to use their language skills to a greater degree at this level. For instance, level-four students are required to write guided compositions.

The student book and the companion workbook of *Reach Out, Why?*, in twelve units provide fifth level students with opportunities for practicing and applying all their English skills, with special emphasis on reading comprehension and writing.

The General Format

Although the number of units in each student book varies, the format of each unit

can generally be divided into three main areas: the introduction, comprehension, and the application.

The introduction is composed of an introductory page which is also the discussion page by which the teacher presents new vocabulary, explains a new grammar point, and also asks questions to assess the effectiveness of the explanations. Sometimes the introduction also includes a review of previous work.

A variety of reinforcement activities found in work pages or in student workbooks aid student comprehension—especially when immediate positive feedback is given to the student. Songs and games are often included in this comprehension section.

A list of enrichment activities are proposed to further stimulate student application of principles learned. A few examples are making picture dictionaries to illustrate “br” words, having pairs of students plan a picnic, teaching the students a poem and having them pick out all the words with the /ay/ sound.

Completeness of Each Book

Each student book in the *Reach Out* series is extremely well balanced—technically in its graphic organization, and also in its coverage of grammar. Some continuity from one level to the next is provided by the spiraling of the vocabulary and grammar and by the appearance of the same faces at times, but each book is still complete in itself. That is, each book is independent of the others because of its target level.

This is advantageous if costs are a consideration. If a teacher felt, for example, that his/her class was at a higher level than the level two of *What?*, then the level 3 book *Where?* could be ordered along with the teacher guide 2&3, which would show the teacher the material level-two students should have been exposed to as well as provide guidelines for the level-three students. The teacher guide would be an excellent review source.

For the new teacher of ESL, *Reach Out* is a great series to use because the teacher guide is just what it purports to be: a handy, step by step, page to page description of “how to’s.” For the experienced teacher, there are options: more than enough activities are listed and described in full; lesson outlines are clearly presented with more than one way to put a point across; and all lessons, though structured tightly, allow for adaptability. For the student, most important of all, this series is not dull or boring but rather stimulating and surprising in the variety of materials and techniques the teacher who follows the outline will employ.

Whether experienced or not, whether their young learners require one or all of the five W’s, teachers can “reach out” with confidence to Macmillan’s *Reach Out*.

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