

In the know ...

In this article from the TES, Rebecca Foster shares five books that she thinks every teacher should have.

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH



'Five books I think no teacher should be without'

Asking an English teacher which books no teacher should be without is akin to asking a mother which of her children she shouldn't be without. I've perhaps found it easier to compile this list than I would choosing which of my children I like best, but it's certainly not been easy to reduce the wealth of great education literature out there down to just five picks. I have, therefore, compiled a list that I think provides not only an essential five, but also a balance of knowledge, practical ideas, challenge, hope and perspective.

1. *Don't Call it Literacy!* by Geoff Barton

This is a book that redefines the idea of literacy as what great teachers do in their classrooms. If I could, I'd put this on the required reading list of every initial teacher training course in the country. Barton argues convincingly about the need for all teachers – whatever their subject – to be confident communicators, readers and writers; he sets out, in his typically no-nonsense style, what every teacher needs to know about literacy. Written with time-poor "real teachers" in mind, it's the kind of book every teacher wants – one filled with practical ideas that work in the classroom.

2. *What Does This Look Like in the Classroom?* by Carl Hendrick and Robin Macpherson

As a profession, we need to be more research-informed so that we can begin to evaluate what actually works in the classroom and be better equipped to call out some of the nonsense we're asked to do. In this book, published this year, Hendrick and Macpherson seek to bridge the gap between research and practice to not only improve pupil outcomes but also reduce teacher workload. One of the best things about this book is how accessible it is – it's dip-in-and-outable. Structured into chapters on topics from behaviour to motivation, questions from teachers are answered by people (William, Christodoulou, Bennett) who really know the research in that area. It's a gateway book into understanding key aspects of our practice.

3. *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Teachers: the Michaela way* edited by Katharine Birbalsingh

Written by teachers at a school which, like Marmite, divides opinion, I think every teacher should read this book. Not only does it stridently challenge the

status quo of mainstream education, it has heart; the moral purpose of The Michaela School runs through this book like grain in wood. Setting out what they do at the school, why and how, it's hard not to be convinced and inspired by their approach.

4. *This much I know about love over fear: creating a culture of truly great teaching* by **John Tomsett**

When so many school leaders are disappointingly contributing to a culture of fear, John Tomsett is a beacon of hope; he's showing how things can be done differently. Informed, personal and compelling, Tomsett shows that it is possible to put teachers first and, by doing so, create an outstanding school that values teacher development, puts trust in teachers as professionals and makes informed decisions about policies and priorities.

5. *Stoner* by **John Williams**

This is the most moving and hauntingly unforgettable book I've ever read. I've still got a book hangover 18 months after reading it for the first time. Through his portrayal of the life of teacher William Stoner, Williams throws into relief the truth of our own lives as teachers. The novel opens with a description of how unremarkable and forgettable Stoner was – an occasional student wonders idly who he was – and then develops into a narrative about his simultaneously extraordinary and disappointing life. It's a novel that reads as a stark but healthy reminder of the limits of our influence but also speaks of a passion for learning and a job that gives Stoner, and so many of us, an identity.

Rebecca Foster is head of English at St Edmund's Girls' School in Salisbury. She tweets [@TLPMsF](#)

Gerard Walker