

Citizenship

General

Developing Citizens ed Tony Breslin and Barry Dufour, Hodder Murray, £25

This book accompanies the DfES-sponsored Making Sense of Citizenship (Hodder Murray £25). It's a dense, slightly worthy but significant book on this important subject, reminding us that well-taught Citizenship should be active, engaging and powerful.

<http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/>

This is undoubtedly the most important website for Citizenship, partly because it allows your school to participate in genuinely active Citizenship projects such as the Young Magistrates competition.

Key Stage 3

Book:

Folens, Accessing ... Diversity and Discrimination

This is much more fun than a coursebook – it's a lively, highly visual collection of images, cartoons, adverts and quotations. In the hands of a confident, committed teacher, it's a perfect source of provocative Citizenship lessons.

Resource:

Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak, Deborah Ellis, Groundwood Books, £5.99

A book for the library rather than for use with a whole class, it's a collection of powerful first-hand accounts of conflict in the Middle East spoken by children. It's often deeply moving.

Website:

<http://www.thenewspaper.org.uk/>

The Newspaper is a great idea – a quality newspaper written for young people which manages to inform but never patronise them. Their website gives a flavour of the print version.

Key Stage 4

Book:

This is ... Citizenship Studies published by John Murray £14.99

Amid a host of coursebooks (many of which reinforce passive learning rather than active participation), This is ... Citizenship Studies stands out for its a lively and entertaining range of resources with activities that include speeches and debates.

Resource:

Come Clean: WMD Awareness Programme, 63a Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3BJ

A political resource about weapons of mass destruction and nuclear build-up, it contains a host of engaging, lively resources for class debates and provoking thinking beyond the tabloid clichés of the usual WMD debate

Website:

<http://www.nead.org.uk/>

NEAD are simply brilliant, working with young people across Eastern England skilfully to raise their awareness of inequalities and the issues facing developing countries.

Key Stage 5

Book:

Politics: Cutting through the Crap, Walker Books, £5.99

A hilarious and knowingly partisan introduction to politics. Your Sixth Form General Studies students and members of the Debating Society will love it.

Website:

<http://www.europeanmovement.org>

A website committed to promulgating the benefits of a united Europe. It's packed with resources and talking-points

Longer review

Citizenship used to feel ostracised, like the incontinent old uncle who would add an unwelcome tang to the family Christmas. But increasingly schools appear to be recognising that an active Citizenship course should be at the heart of what we do, translating understanding about the world and moral issues into a genuine opportunity for pupil voice.

The best books of theory are Developing Citizens (Hodder Murray) edited by Tony Breslin and Barry Dufour. It's not an easy or especially engaging read, and some of the later material lacks bite, but the early rationale and history of Citizenship are spot-on, and a timely reminder of why the subject needs to gain in status.

Susie Weller's Teenagers' Citizenship: Experiences and Education (Routledge) is also good, with some excellent case studies of how students can take an active role in their citizenship courses.

KS3

Folens make a decent fist of a resource for lower ability students with their Specials collection. There are straightforward activities plus a CD of additional resources. It's lowest common denominator Citizenship, but may engage some students, even if it isn't particularly active.

More interesting is their Accessing ... series which explores themes like Diversity and Discrimination through a largely visual format. This is a lively and entertaining way to teach Citizenship – but it needs a confident teacher. There are variations for SEN and gifted and talented students.

KS4

Key stage 4 is dominated by course books. Mostly they are dire – attached to specific examination boards. They reinforce the misguided notion that Citizenship is about passive acquisition of knowledge. Most are therefore deeply depressing. Best of them is This is ... Citizenship Studies published by John Murray, which at least contains a lively and entertaining range of resources and activities that include speeches and debates.

KS5

The title of Bali Rai's Politics: Cutting through the Crap probably tells you all you need to know. This is an irreverent and wholly partisan summary of British politics. As the blurb on the back cover says, "it's totally biased". But there's something refreshing and politically incorrect in this anecdotal approach. The first word of the chapter about "the War on Terror" is "hmmmm". You need a student audience that is savvy enough to deal with this level of sophistication, but overall it's a rollicking read and a reminder that politics can be fun. Yes, honestly.

General

Susie Weller, Teenagers' Citizenship: Experiences and Education:

At first we pick this up as if it's any other academic guide to a subject. It's full of references and perspectives and, in the early chapter, aims to tell us more of what we know about teenagers. Then there's a history of Citizenship. Finally we get onto the most interesting material – the demonstration of what an active approach to Citizenship looks like, with interviews from students, photographs and accounts of projects. It makes for a neat mixture of theory and practice, even though it's rooted in a bit too much of a “yoof”-based approach to the subject for my taste.