

**A Grammar Companion for
Primary Teachers by Beverly
Derewianka**

Primary English Teaching Association,
Australia, 1998, reprinted 2004,
www.peta.edu.au

This is a little gem of a book (just 124 pages) that might help people understand better the grammatical underpinning that is implicit in much of the literacy and language policy that pours out of the DfES. Quite why they never fully acknowledge the role of functional grammar is a bit of a mystery, maybe it's because they realise that people might expect a bit more training than the laughable nonsense I was exposed to by my literacy consultant when they introduced the KS3 literacy framework all those years ago. (My favourite quote being 'You don't have to read whole books any more, you can meet all the literacy targets using short extracts.')

Not everyone feels up to tackling Halliday on their own and Beverly Derewianka has done a terrific job in making it not only accessible to the non-specialist but also applicable to the classroom. She provides succinct and meaningful definitions of terms, presents information in tables and diagrams, and always relates it to ways in which teachers might actually use grammar to support their children's learning. Every topic includes sections on formation, meaning and troubleshooting. Here she is on 'articles' for example:

Generally the use of articles is relatively straightforward and should not cause problems for students. It is the sort of knowledge we pick up from immersion in the language and use without thinking. Students learning English as a second language (ESL), however, particularly those more recently arrived, could have difficulties knowing when to use a/an, when to use the, and when not to use anything... Many languages use articles in quite different ways, so ESL students will need assistance in this area.

She calls it a 'companion' and that's just how it feels – someone to take with you on the long journey from Words to Discourse. Every backpack should have one.

Frank Monaghan