An interview with Robert Campbell

Robert Campbell is the editor and publisher of the online magazine its-teachers.com. He has written several readers, including *The Time Capsule* (Helbling Languages), a finalist in the 2011 Extensive Reading Foundation Learner Literature Awards.

**Why use graded readers?**
We’re all used to the reading texts that appear in course books. They’re normally quite short and designed to be used for finding specific information, practising language items, or generating interest in a certain topic. A graded reader allows the student to enjoy some extensive reading in much the same way as they would when reading a book or a lengthy magazine article in their own language.

**What do you think are the most important ingredients of a successful reader?**
A good story. If it’s original fiction then the characters and plot have to be good enough to maintain the student’s interest. With original fiction, the student doesn’t know anything about the story you’re telling them, which is exciting for a writer.

**Does that mean you think original fiction is the best option?**
No, not necessarily. It depends on the teacher and the students. Some students will find it more motivating to read a book based on a film they’ve seen. Or a classic work of fiction that they have some prior knowledge of. Or maybe a fact-based reader that covers a topic they’re interested in. These are all good options and can offer the teacher the opportunity to use a wide range of additional materials. But reading some new original fiction can lead to a different experience.

**Do you think it’s best to use one book for the whole class or have a class library and let students read different books?**
I like both options and there’s no reason you can’t do both at the same time. If you’re using a reader in class time and maybe focusing on a new chapter each week then you can really make use of the resources that come with readers and encourage students to comment on the story, act it out, write scenes of their own… At the same time, you can encourage them to pick another book of their own choice from the library, to read in their own time and at their own pace.

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