

Book Review

Primary Pronunciation Box

Caroline Nixon and Michael Tomlinson

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Reviewed by **Don Bartlett**

This is a pronunciation games and activities book for younger learners. The material is divided into three parts: part one for 7 to 8-year-olds; part two for 9 to 10-year-olds and part three for 11 to 12-year-olds. The book, in A4 photocopiable format, contains at least 55 lessons with individual lesson plans, extension activities, and a clearly articulated and varied CD. Although the printed material is in black-and-white, it is attractively laid out and presented. In the index, teachers can find the activity titles, the pronunciation focus, the activity types, the expected classroom time for the activity and the classroom format.

The book opens with a phonic approach to the alphabet so that children become familiar with one possible pronunciation of each letter. Then the writers focus on vowel sounds and a variety of interesting activities to practise phoneme discrimination, not according to the *Ship or Sheep* pattern. Interestingly, the schwa isn't mentioned at any stage, but possibly the argument is that unstress doesn't deserve greater attention, which seems practical. The various activities (such as rhyme matches and phoneme recognition) are designed to give children a scheme without presenting the phonemic symbols themselves, again very practical. Many primary teachers have reservations about introducing the IPA chart at this level. The IPA underlies everything, but doesn't appear at all, although, very usefully, at the end of the CD there is a list of the sounds as they appear in words. The

selection of individual sounds or groups of sounds, predominantly vowels, does not seem to suggest any particular criteria or language learning community, but all the activities are useful and, I imagine, enjoyable. Simple chants, rap and action songs (and more) are introduced in order to develop rhythm alongside segmental phonological features.

Levels two and three continue to focus mainly on vowels, although there is an increasing interest in syllables, word stress, linking and stress in connected chunks, such as nursery rhymes etc. One or two of the forms are a bit strained, such as *cheeseburger* with the stress on the second syllable, but the emphasis is on rhythm and it is fun.

There is a good spread of activity type and I think that children will love the play element of this material. The book is constructed so that teachers can follow the course in a linear fashion, but it is also the type of book you can dip into and find something valid and enjoyable to do. Some of the lessons are possibly a bit labour-intensive, in that the teacher has to photocopy, cut up and laminate cards for a whole class, but then you have a good resource for a number of classes and years.

All in all, this book has many strengths and I am sure that YL teachers will welcome it with open arms. Furthermore, the CD gives EFL teachers the support they often feel they need.

Don Bartlett is a freelance translator and a teacher trainer who works and lives in Norwich.