



UNCHARTED TERRITORIES

ADVENTURES IN LEARNING

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illustrated by gabriel kidd



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FOREWORD

I am delighted and honoured to have been asked to write the foreword to this book, the authors of which are colleagues with whom I have had the privilege to work on more than one occasion. Every time I have done so, I have learned a great deal and this book captures a huge amount of that learning.

It is a book that offers ideas and practical suggestions that can be translated into the classroom to the benefit of teachers and learners. It will be a treasure trove that you can return to again and again to find inspiration, strategies and tools.

It is also a book that contains arguments and ideas. It is much more than a handbook – much more, even, than a very good toolkit. I read it from cover to cover and was struck by the way in which all the elements of the book blend together to achieve the ambition that it sets for itself. It is “an unabashed call to arms for the imagination”.

It encourages you to work with ideas from young people, identify their strengths, give them the chance to co-construct the learning and help them to tap into their potential. It also answers the question that I keep asking: “How do you know what the potential of learners is, unless you allow them to surprise you?” This book is full of contexts and questions which offer that opportunity.

“But what about knowledge, discipline and attainment?” you might ask. The answer is that these elements are all here too. Debra and Hywel identify concepts and content which they map onto the curriculum. In my terms, they show us how to “imagine up” and then to “engineer back down again”.

This might be a rallying call, but it is a very responsible one which recognises that our role as educators is not only to inform, but also to engage and inspire. Fundamentally, it is a book that sees and makes the links between all three ambitions.

Give yourself a treat – read it and come away recharged, re-equipped and reaffirmed in your commitment to offer learners a richer and more effective experience in your classes. You can't ask for much more than that!

David Cameron, Kirkcaldy, Fife

acknowledgements

giants' shoulders

We first met on a Saturday in 2004, at a training day with Dorothy Heathcote. Hywel was Jack, Debra was Jill. We've been rolling down hills ever since. Matthew Milburn, then head of Kingstone School in Barnsley, was looking to set up a new Key Stage 3 curriculum which would offer a bridge between the primary and secondary phases and would give children a dilemma-led, humane learning experience. He asked Debra to set it up and to train the staff in the pedagogical approach that would bring the curriculum to life. Hywel was an AST at the school and, over the next two years, the staff who devised and delivered that cultural studies curriculum led a pedagogical revolution across the school that had a significant impact not just on results but on the attitudes and confidence of staff and learners alike. We've not looked back. We owe Matthew and other members of that team – particularly Ondrie Mann and Jane Hewitt – our careers. And, of course, we must also acknowledge the formidable, knowledgeable, compassionate and uncompromisingly rigorous Dorothy Heathcote – the best teacher either of us has ever known.

We both started out as English teachers in the 1990s and, like many English teachers, we ended up also teaching and loving drama. But drama teaching is very specific – it isn't an offshoot of English. It demands a skill set and knowledge base that is broad, both practical and theoretical and also deeply emotional. We needed training. We both remain thankful to the National Association for the Teaching of Drama (NATD) for offering that training and we would like to raise a glass to professional subject bodies everywhere, who hold up their members with support, advice, subject knowledge and more. And to those veteran practitioners, in particular Luke Abbott, who taught us how to look, how to think, how to listen and how to be our authentic selves: thank you.

There be images in this book and neither one of us could have produced these. To Gabriel Kidd, who created them while juggling his A levels, thank you. And to Ian

Gilbert who saw potential in us both some years ago and encouraged us to write, thanks to you too.

No one succeeds alone. This work is credited to the thousands of children, teachers, teaching assistants and leaders who have let us be the teachers we are and who have encouraged us at every step. Thank you.

And finally to our families. For holding back the eye-rolling and the sighs; for picking up the endless domestic duties; for putting up with our bad jokes; for patiently asking the same question ten times before it got through to our daydreaming heads. To Maria, Cath, Tommy, Allan, Joe, Gabriel, Sam – the most patient giants in town – thank you.

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INTRODUCTION

A STATEMENT OF INTENT

Dear parents, teachers, educators and children,

Teachers can't possibly work harder. Schools can't possibly do more. As hard as they may try to, and in spite of all this effort, results don't improve and our children and teachers' mental health suffers. Outside of education, our planet is facing challenges that only the best kinds of thinking will be able to fix. Teaching children the best that has been thought and said only takes us so far. It takes us into our rich and fascinating past. But the future will demand the best that is yet to be said, yet to be thought and yet to be done. That thinking and that action will be done by our children and in order to equip them with the capacity, belief and desire to engage with this, we need to look to the future – empowering children with the belief that they can be agents for change, armed with the tools to imagine themselves into a more humane, creative world.

So this book is an unabashed call to arms for the imagination. For of all the unique attributes of humankind, it is the *imagination* that elevates us to a place where possibilities can become probabilities: to a place of hope. And as teachers, parents and carers of children, what are we if not architects of hope?

Dr Debra Kidd

Hywel Roberts

SOME ROUTES TO THE ROOTS OF THINKING AND LEARNING

Warriors of wonder, let's begin.

This is a book of prompts, provocations and possibilities designed to nourish your creativity and generate ideas that get you excited about learning. It invites a reassessment of what curriculum coverage can look like in the classroom, or even in the home. Rest assured that all the ideas in this book are rooted in practice and grounded in research and have been held up to the scrutiny of professionals across the planet. We want to share with you these routes to joy, warmth, enrichment and progress in the classroom, and we have set the book out accordingly. These are not knowledge organisers or schemes of work; they are inspirational tickles – ideas to get you and your children frothing at the mouth with a sense of purpose while motivating learners to acquire, interpret and apply knowledge and use it to solve problems. Whether you are in an early years setting or a secondary geography classroom, there are adaptable possibilities woven throughout each chapter that place learners, of whatever age, knee-deep in *dilemma*, so that they are thinking deeply, analytically and imaginatively.

Each chapter begins with an image that can be used as a hook into learning in its own right. There are story starters and questions attached to the image to stimulate the imagination and provoke discussion and writing. In addition, each chapter is packed with starting points and “what ifs ...?” to establish rich contexts and scenarios for exploration, supported by inductive questioning. We explore these contexts using a variety of approaches, including several drama techniques. For the uninitiated, these appear in bold and are outlined in a list in the back of the book.

Each chapter focuses on a different place. This location is the space our learning will inhabit, where it will be applied and challenged. This *imagined* context, as fantastical as it may appear, will always have the real world as its destination, and the curriculum – as much of it as you wish to explore – sits there, waiting to be discovered. These places are imagined in your classroom, but we would urge you to link them to tangible, lived experiences by taking children out into real forests and caves, mountains and castles, zoos and theme parks. There is a world of

curriculum in each of these places. Although we develop a single idea in more detail in each chapter, this is meant to stimulate your own thoughts and imagination and to liberate you from the same old, same old. Be brave!

In this time of high-stakes testing, growing mental health issues among young people, increasing pressure on teachers to focus not on engagement and relevance in learning but instead on rote repetition, practice papers and panic, we have to step back and ask the question, “What is the purpose of education?” If you think it is to get children through tests, then this book is probably not for you. If you think it is to develop wisdom in children – the capacity to think, to apply knowledge, to empathise, to weigh up evidence, to consider consequences and to make informed choices – then this book is most definitely for you.

It is our firm belief, rooted in over 40 years of collective experience, that the most successful schools see examinations as by-products of a great education – not as the end product. They see that education itself is a much more complex journey into the heart of what it is to be human. To reflect that journey, we have organised this book as a series of maps and guides. They are concept and inquiry driven and dovetail beautifully with the Primary Years Programme (PYP) and Middle Years Programme (MYP) of the International Baccalaureate (IB). We’ve used our native UK terminology of primary, secondary and key stages throughout, but the ideas here are in no way tied to one country or system of education.¹ It is our hope that whatever your context or setting you’ll find adaptable ideas that will work in your classroom – this exploration has no borders. No curriculum is so restrictive that this kind of work can’t take hold. You just need a good guide book. And here it is.

In each chapter you will find:

the key

This is an image and a related story starter. It introduces our location and poses some provocative initial questions. It can be used as a stand-alone thinking exercise or as part of the routes to learning – it’s up to you. At the

¹ For quick reference, Key Stage 3 is roughly equivalent with the US middle school or junior high and the first half of the IB MYP.

very least, it should fire the children’s imaginations and stimulate ideas for exploration and writing. Each illustration is available to download from www.crownhouse.co.uk/featured/uncharted-territories so you can use these as prompts for discussion, role play or writing – or anything else that takes your imagination – with your classes.

primary landmarks

This is a list of potential starting points and ideas which can be used in a primary classroom. We might call them “hooks” or “lures”, both of which are not intended to entice children into learning, but to induct them into deep thinking. It’s not about coating a strawberry in chocolate – using something as a distraction from the learning – it’s about appreciating the strawberry itself – focusing on the underlying substance. Each landmark is linked to an overarching concept and line of inquiry, but these are simply suggestions and you are free to find your own.

secondary landmarks

This is a list of starting points, similar to the primary landmarks but for the secondary classroom, with a slightly greater emphasis on subject-related focus points and ideas. We have tried, as far as possible, to avoid tying these to particular subjects in the hope that some of these sections might encourage interdisciplinary learning opportunities, but we know that canny subject specialists will tune into the elements relevant to their teaching and, in any case, all of these ideas can be adapted for or linked to many different disciplines.

a stopover

This is a more in-depth account of a learning journey, offering transferable ideas that can be adjusted to work with whatever age group you teach. What we’re saying is, just because an idea might appear more appropriate for a

primary class, and you teach secondary (or vice versa), you should not necessarily discount it. The ideas and concepts – and some of the tasks and techniques – can be filtered and transferred in a number of situations and settings.

STEPPING STONES

These are context-based tasks that you could carry out with your children. They are also included to prod your professional imagination and to explore how elements of, for example, literacy and/or numeracy could be incorporated into the scenario in order to save curriculum time.

THE BEDROCK

This is the *why* of what we are offering in each example: a debrief of the processes and the theoretical and academic underpinning. Just in case anyone asks. It's critical that, as teachers, we understand why we do what we do and that we're able to justify it when questioned. The bedrock sections give you more detailed information about learning and the underpinning research.

The real driver that prompted us to write this book was the hundreds of inspirational teachers we have worked with who have found that, in recent years, their own creativity has been stifled somewhat by the fog of bureaucracy and the narrowing of the curriculum offer. A rising fear of not *covering the content of the curriculum* and of hit-or-miss inspections has led to a shortening of that list of strategies deemed “the right way”. Rather than seeing teachers as trainers of children, we would rather think of ourselves as Sherpas of the curriculum and that's why we've shaped the book in the way we have.

So, take our hands and walk with us. There may be dragons.



chapter 1

The forest

All the stories were gathered here, in one place.

Why is the figure in the forest?

Will the trees protect the forest visitor?

Where next for this forest visitor?

Is this a secret place?

Why might trees not like books?

Can a tree weep?

What else have the trees witnessed?

Who sits in the light, gathering the books?

Is the book we see in the distance coming towards us, or being sucked away?

Your own questions ...

.....
Download the image from www.crownhouse.co.uk/featured/uncharted-territories

- ⦿ **What if ...** the children, in role as surveyors, were asked to inspect and write a report on a derelict Gothic property, hidden deep in the forest? The children are only told that the report should be positive and that the client is a rich man who lives abroad. If he buys the property, they will receive a fee. To entice them in, you can use an image of an abandoned house in a forest. The property has been empty for many, many years. They enter the forest on a dark, dreary day. Having mapped out the house, describing the rooms, they write a full report, describing the house in as positive a light as they can. But then, they receive a letter from their client, who is revealed as none other than Count Dracula ... He is looking forward to receiving their report and is keen to purchase a new home. But do they really want Count Dracula to move into the forest? What about the other people living there? Would he be a danger to them? What should they do next? How can they put him off? Or would they sell the house and take the fee?

Concept: Public interest.

Lines of inquiry: Is the customer always right? Are there some circumstances in which we have a duty to say no? How do you say no to someone who is more powerful than you?

Curriculum areas: Geographical mapping, producing scaled drawings (area, scale and ratio), report writing, measuring, Gothic literature, letter writing, problem solving.

- ⦿ **What if ...** Little Red Riding Hood, months after her trauma with the wolf, is too frightened to venture outside? Her friends are worried about her. They decide they must go into the forest to seek out the wolf's family in an attempt to negotiate a restorative conversation between their friend and the wolves. But they find, to their surprise, that the wolves are also too scared to leave their lair after the incident. How can peace be restored in the forest? Is it possible for the wolves and the humans to coexist in this habitat? Could we create a safe habitat for the wolves so they are kept away from the humans?

Concept: Restorative justice.

Lines of inquiry: How do we help people to recover from bad events? What responsibility do we bear for our friends' and family's actions? Can we change our nature?

Discover a wealth of prompts, provocations and possibilities designed to nourish your creativity and generate ideas that will get you excited about learning

Rooted in practice and grounded in research, *Uncharted Territories* invites a reassessment of what curriculum coverage can look like and provides an abundance of hooks into exploratory learning that place learners – of whatever age – knee-deep in *dilemma*, so that they are thinking deeply, analytically and imaginatively.

These are not knowledge organisers or schemes of work; rather they are inspirational forays into imagined contexts for learning which, as fantastical as they may appear, always have the real world as their destination. With their story starters and inductive questions, not to mention the illustrations which are sure to fire children's imaginations, Hywel and Debra's innovative routes to learning will help you stray from the beaten track of the curriculum and instil in learners a sense of purpose as they discover, manipulate and apply knowledge and skills across a range of collaborative, cross-curricular problem-solving contexts.

Designed for use with learners of all ages, from early years to secondary

Whether you are a novice or someone who has been this way before, *Uncharted Territories* is a book that will help you tread a pathway into the imaginations of young people.

Mick Waters, Professor of Education, University of Wolverhampton

I wish my teachers had read this.

Alice Nutter, playwright and screenwriter

A fantastic resource for teachers across the curriculum, *Uncharted Territories* places creativity at the centre of pedagogy to inspire innovative and challenging practice.

Professor Damien Page, Dean, Carnegie School of Education, Leeds Beckett University

An excellent resource for supporting a rigorous inquiry-led approach to classroom practice.

Richard Parker, Principal, ISL UK

For teachers looking for more innovative and creative ways to fire children's imaginations, *Uncharted Territories* is exceptionally useful.

Carl Hendrick, Head of Learning and Research, Wellington College

The possibilities are endless – and that really, really excites me.

Clare Barton, Director of Production, Olga TV

Hywel Roberts has taught in secondary, primary and special settings for over 25 years. He contributes to university education programmes and writes regularly for *TES* as the “travelling teacher”. A true Northerner, Hywel deals in “botheredness, creative practice, curriculum development and engineering. He was recently described as “a world leader in enthusiasm” and his first book, *Oops! Helping Children Learn Accidentally*, is a favourite among teachers.

Dr Debra Kidd taught for 23 years in primary, secondary and higher education settings. She is the author of two previous books, *Teaching: Notes from the Front Line* and *Becoming Mobius: The Complex Matter of Education*, but this latest project with Hywel Roberts is her favourite because it represents where her heart is – in the classroom. Debra is the co-founder and organiser of Northern Rocks – one of the largest teaching and learning conferences in the UK. She also has a doctorate in education and believes more than anything else that the secret to great teaching is to “make it matter”.

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