DIGITAL TOOLS FOR TEACHERS

BY NIK PEACHEY

INTRODUCTION

This book has been written and designed primarily with English language teachers in mind though the majority of the resources and tools contained in the book will have much wider use than just language teaching.

The book contains more than 70 tools and resources and these have been hand picked because they represent a broad cross-section of what is at present available.

INTRODUCTION

Whilst many teachers and educationalists continue to argue about the distracting influence of digital devices in the classroom and their impact on students' attention spans, there can be few who still argue that teachers should not be using web based digital resources and tools in education.

There has been a shift over the last two decades from whether we should use them to how we should use them and which tools and resources we should be using and when. Most teachers have accepted and are willing to engage with the process of sifting through the available resources and looking for ways that these can support and augment their students' learning.

This task can at times seem daunting with a constant plethora of new sites, apps and resources constantly emerging whilst many of the trusted resources we have used in the past can quickly seem outdated or disappear altogether. It is for his reason that I have developed this ebook. The book is designed to help teachers by providing them with up-to-date information about new and existing resources and by simply classifying them to make it easier to find tools and resources that match their aims and purpose.

The chapters of the book are divided into simple pedagogical tasks that most teachers need to carry out or help their students with and the descriptions of the resources are suitably concise to make the book easy for a stressed teacher to access and browse in a few spare moments between classes.

CONTENTS

The sites, apps and resources within the book have been divided into the following chapters:

- Reading Tools
- Writing Tools
- Speaking Tools
- Listening Tools
- Grammar Tools
- Presentation Tools
- Poll & Survey Tools
- Infographic Tools
- Course Creation Tools

At present each chapter contains between 5 - 10 different sites that have been selected to help you make a quick choice of the tools you need.

All of the tools and resources selected for the book are either free or have a useable permanent freemium offering, so you will never be forced to pay for any of these resources in order to sustain the work you are doing with your students.

I do recommend though that when you do find any resources particularly useful, and when you feel you would like to continue using them on a longer term basis, that you consider upgrading to a premium account and so give the financial support that many of the companies need to sustain their business and make improvements and developments from which you and other teachers will eventually benefit.

KEEPING UP-TO-DATE

Over the coming years it is my intention to regularly review and expand on the contents of this book. If you would like to be involved and assist in this process you can do so by:

- Suggesting tools to be included in future editions
- Writing an entry about a tool you have used and found useful
- Reporting a dead link or a tool or resource that has become commercially unviable for teachers
- Reporting a typo or factual error.

Anyone who contributes in any of the ways above will get a brief mention in the next edition of the book along with a link to their own blog or website.

Send contributions to:
nik.peachey@peacheypublications.com

FURTHER READING

Digital Video - A Manual for Language Teachers

- This is the first book in the Digital Classrooms series and the winner of the 2016 British Council Innovations award for Teacher Resources. The book combines practical classroom activities with resources reviews and 27 video tutorials to help teachers develop the skills they need to effectively exploit one of the most useful resources available online.

Thinking Critically through Digital Media

- This book was designed to help teachers exploit a wide range of digital tasks and resources to encourage students to think more critically about web based media. The book contains 12 lesson plans, the whole of 'Exploiting Infographics' and more chapters including how to exploit poll and survey resources as well as tasks for exploiting presentations.

Exploiting Infographics

- This book was designed to help teachers understand how to exploit Infographics both as resources for prompting discussion and digital research but also as motivating creative tasks for the development of digital skills. The book contains a range of advice and example tasks that can be used with a wide range of classes. This book is also contained within 'Thinking Critically through Digital Media'.

10 Lessons in Digital Literacy

- This book contains a collection of 10 lesson plans that are designed to develop students' digital literacy and critical thinking skills. All ten lessons are also included in 'Thinking Critically through Digital Media'.

Web 2.0 Tools for Teachers

- This is the oldest of the books and was first published in 2009 on Scribd. It has since been downloaded more than 250k times. It contains reviews of ten tools along with a range of pedagogical activities that can be used with each one.

LESSON PLANS

Each of these lesson plans constitutes between 90 and 180 minutes of study and can be used in part as simple conversation classes or in total for deeper research projects. All lesson plans are included in 'Thinking Critically through Digital Media' and a selection of 10 are included in '10 Lessons in Digital Literacy'.

- A World without Magnets
- Breakfast around the World
- Perceptions of Advertising
- Emotional Intelligence
- Careers for Introverts & Extroverts
- The Science of Happiness
- The History of Weddings
- Studying How to Study
- 50 Facts about Hair
- Body language
- Mind your Waste
- The Habits of the World's Wealthiest People

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nik Peachey is a freelance teacher trainer, writer, conference speaker and learning technology consultant.

He has been involved in education since 1990 and has lived and worked all over the world.

He is a two time British Council Innovations Award Winner and the Co - founder of PeacheyPublications.com.

He has worked with a wide range of educational companies, publishers and institutions including Macmillan, CUP, OUP, British Council, International House, Bell Educational Services, University of Westminster, The Open University, The BBC, Google Creative Labs and many more.

Nik is a keen blogger and content curator. You can find his blogs at: https://nikpeachey.blogspot.co.uk/ and https://nikpeachey.blogspot.co.uk/ and his curation sites at: http://www.scoop.it/t/tools-for-learners and http://www.scoop.it/t/learning-technology

He also publishes a twice monthly Learning Technology and ELT newsletter at: https://tinyletter.com/technogogy/

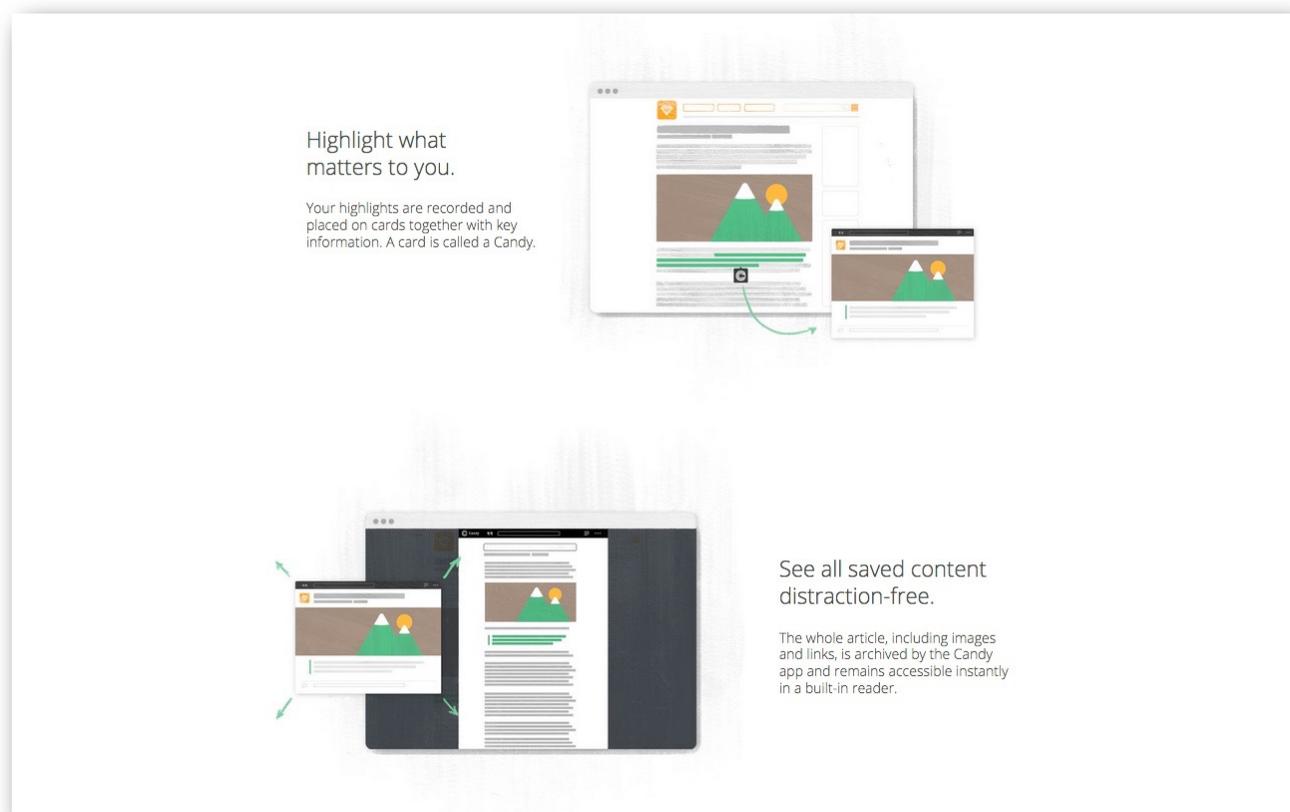# COPYRIGHT AND PIRACY

READING TOOLS

This chapter contains a range of tools and resources to help you develop your students' reading skills. These range from tools to assist with vocabulary whilst reading to resources with a wide range of ready-made graded authentic and semi authentic content to help engage and motivate your students both at home and in the classroom.

READING TOOLS

"This is a great study tool for doing digital research and a great way to build students' digital literacy skills."

Candy - https://www.candybank.com/

This is a really useful Google Chrome plugin that students can use to save quotes or images from websites as they do online research. They just highlight parts of the webpage they want to save and click on the 'Candy' icon. The information is saved into their 'Bank'.
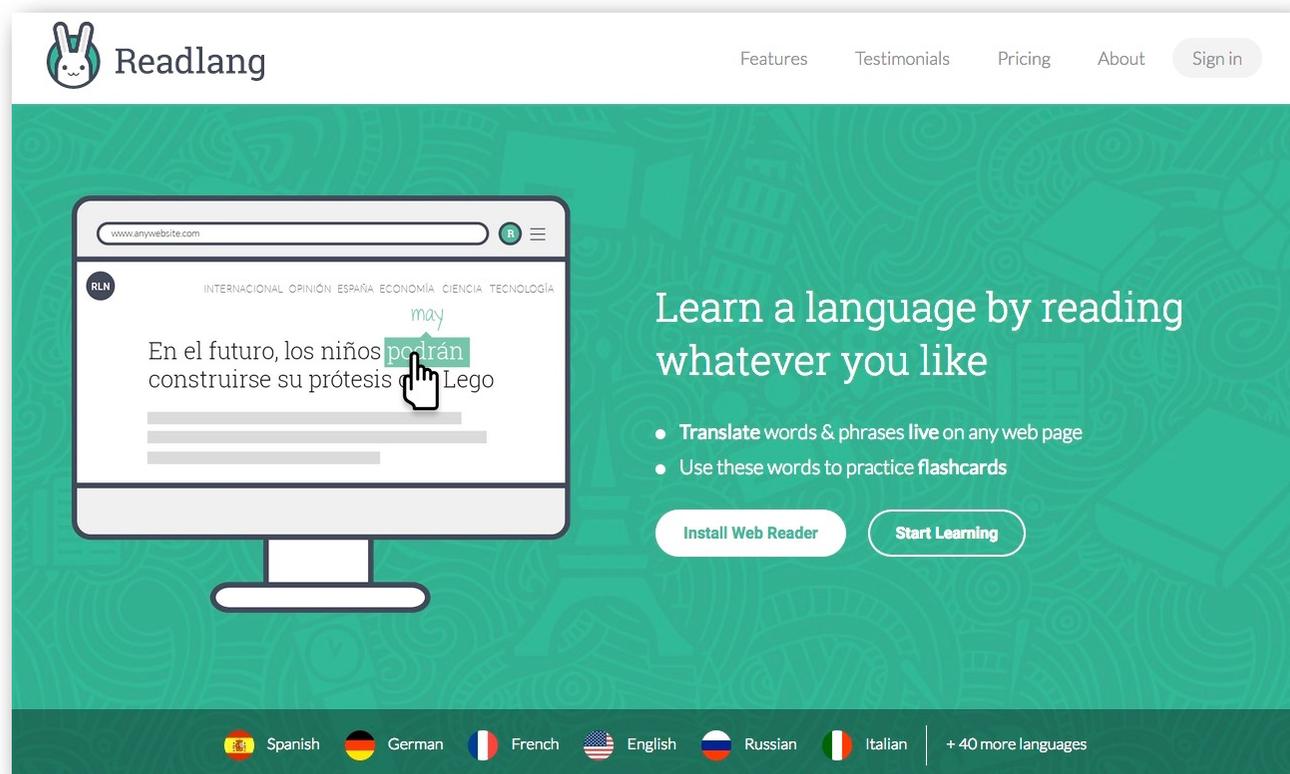

All information that is saved is linked back to the original source and students can add notes about the information and why they saved it. They can also organise and rearranging the information they save to make it more accessible. This is a great study tool for doing digital research and a great way to build students' digital literacy skills.

READING TOOLS

"This is a good sound way to use translation to support reading and vocabulary building."

ReadLang - http://readlang.com

This is a useful tool to assist students' reading and to build vocabulary. They just add the browser plugin and then click on words to get translations of any words they highlight in an online text. The words they translate are saved into their profile and they can then use them to generate flashcard revision activities.

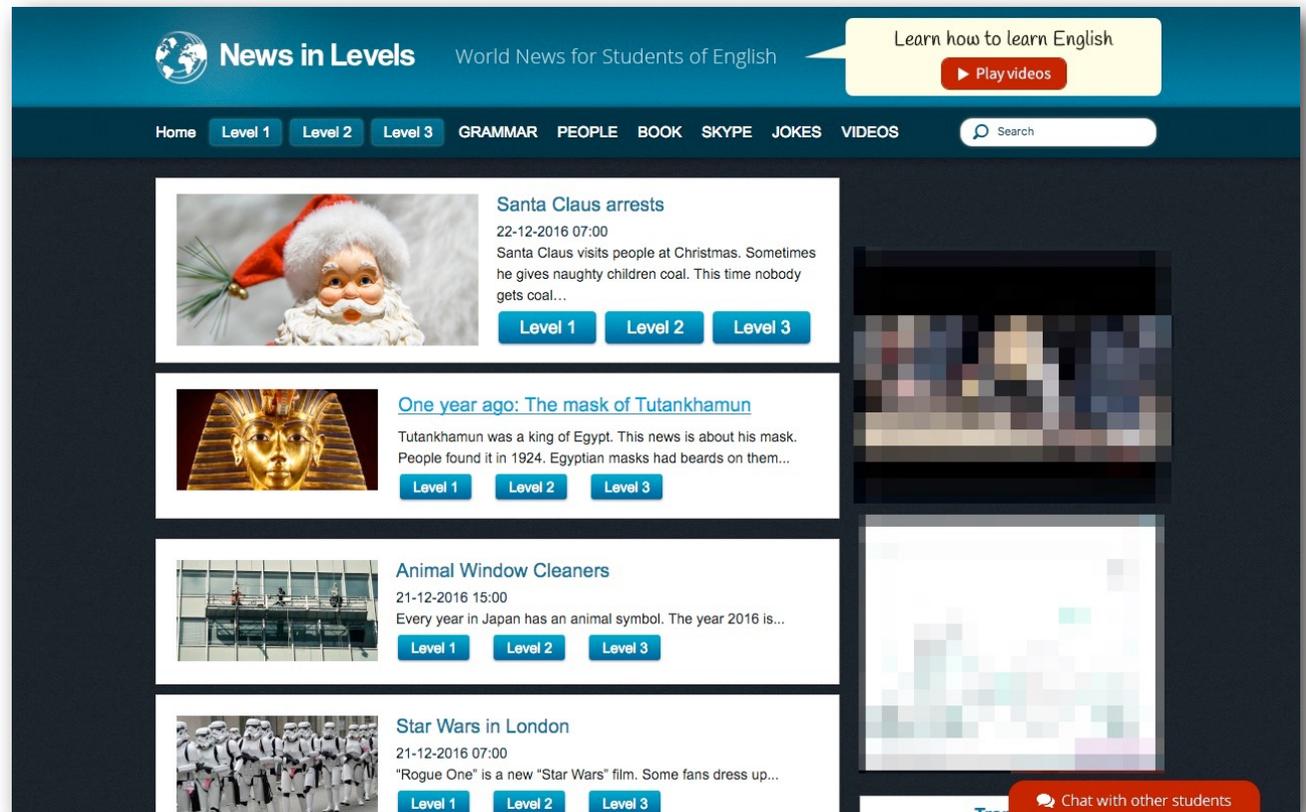Students can also edit the flashcards and add additional information to them.

This is a good sound way to use translation to support reading and vocabulary building. It is a freemium product so students can use it to learn 10 new words each day. If they want unlimited use then there is a charge of around $5 for a year.

READING TOOLS

"This is a great way to get students at lower levels engaged with current topics."

News in Levels - http://www.newsinlevels.com/

This is a useful site to find semi authentic content for lower levels. The content is based around current news items and each article is available at three different levels.

The texts also have a recording of someone reading the news. Level 1 is a very simplified version of the text with quite a slow clear reading.
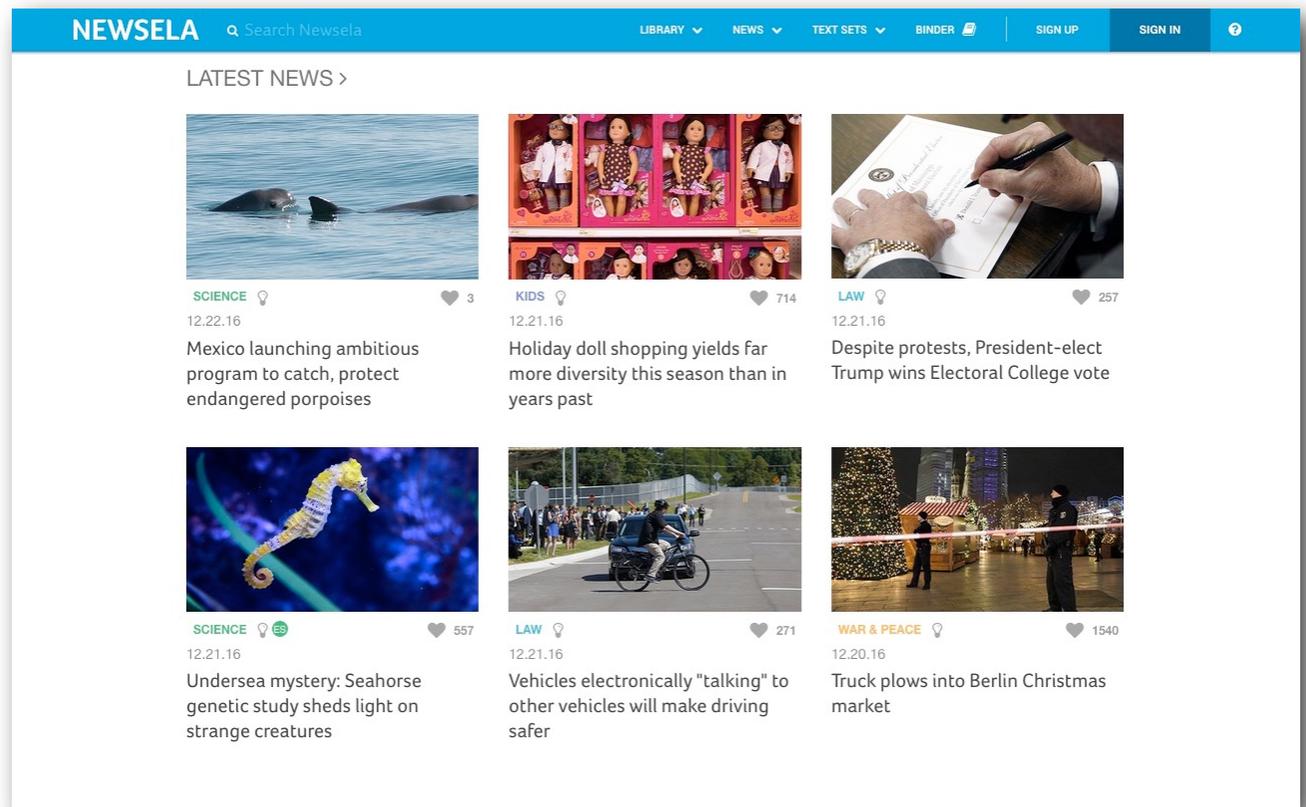
The top level texts can be as long as 3000 words. There is also an app version for both iOS and Android. This is a great way to get students at lower levels engaged with current topics in English.

READING TOOLS

Newsela - https://newsela.com/

This is another site that uses news stories as the basis for language learning. Each story can be accessed at different levels and if students register they can also access interactive quizzes and open-text comprehension questions that have been set by their teacher.

"This is a really marvellous tool for structuring students' reading development in an engaging way."
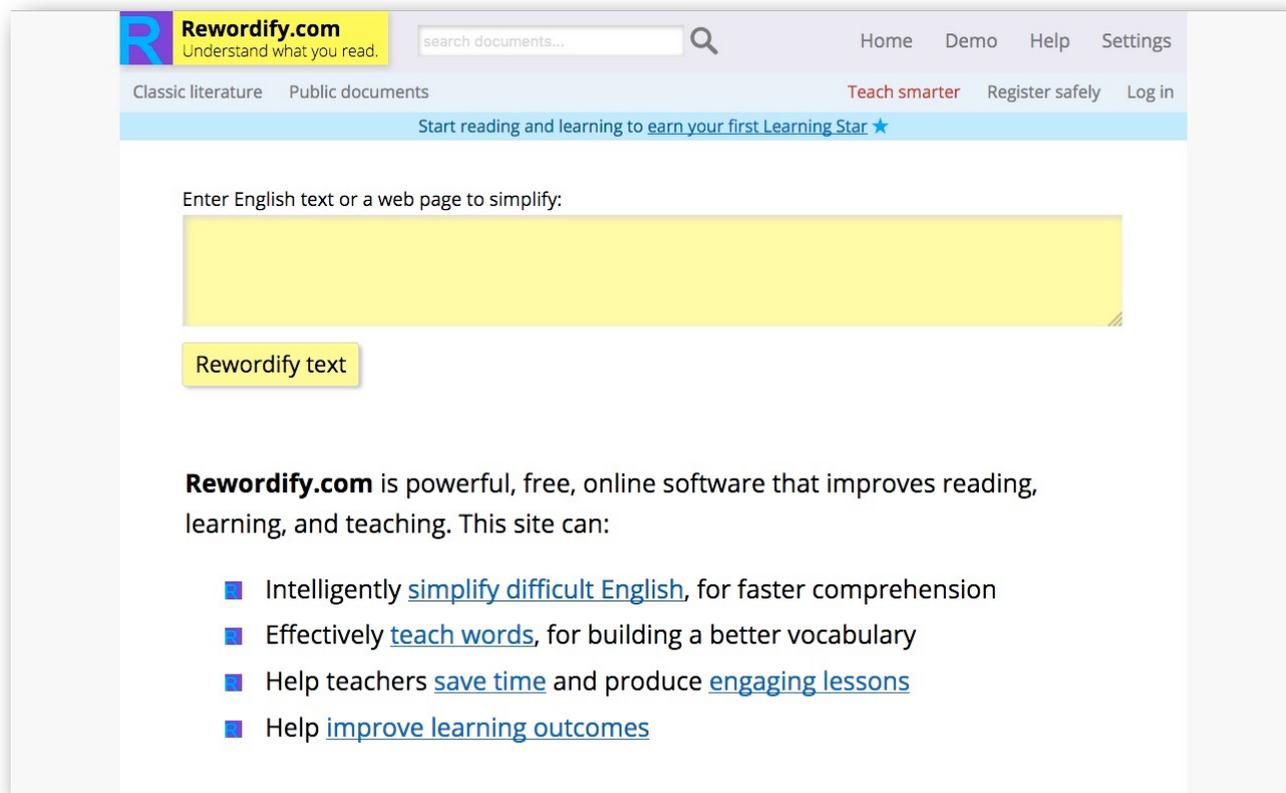

If you register as a teacher the site also offers you some LMS type management tools that enable you to track learners' scores and set questions. This makes it ideal for setting and checking reading homework. This is a really marvellous tool for structuring students' reading development in an engaging way.

READING TOOLS

"This is a great tool for helping students develop reading skills and helping teachers to produce motivating reading activities based around authentic content."

Rewordify - http://rewordify.com/index.php

This is a useful tool for creating a reading activity based around any text. Just copy and paste text into the yellow field and click on 'Rewordify text' and the text will be simplified to make it easier to read.

The site will also help you create vocabulary activities based around synonyms and you can also print a number of activity types based around the text including a cloze test. There is also an interesting feature which analyses and highlights all the parts of speech in different colours.
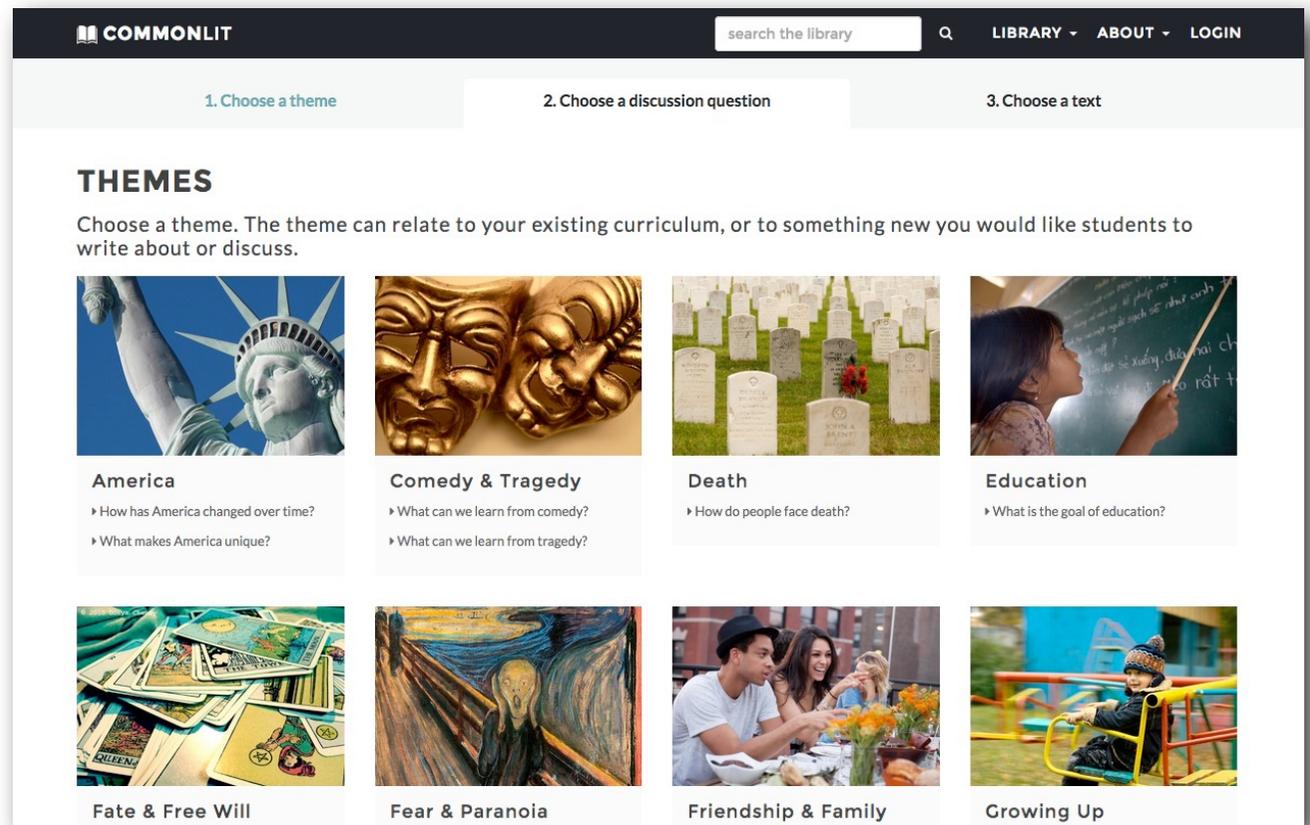
This is a great tool for helping students develop reading skills and helping teachers to produce motivating reading activities based around up to the moment content.

READING TOOLS

"This is great for getting students to work more autonomously on their reading skills."

CommonLit - https://www.commonlit.org/themes.html

This site was designed to help grade K5 - K12 native speaker students develop their reading and comprehension skills, but can also be really useful for second language development.

Students can choose from a range of graded texts and get a wide range of interactive activities and reading support. Teachers can also register on the site and assign specific texts to their students.

The reading support tools combine text-dependent comprehension questions and discussion type questions to focus students' attention as well as text-to-speech and dictionary / glossary type vocabulary support. Students and teachers can also download the text as a pdf file.
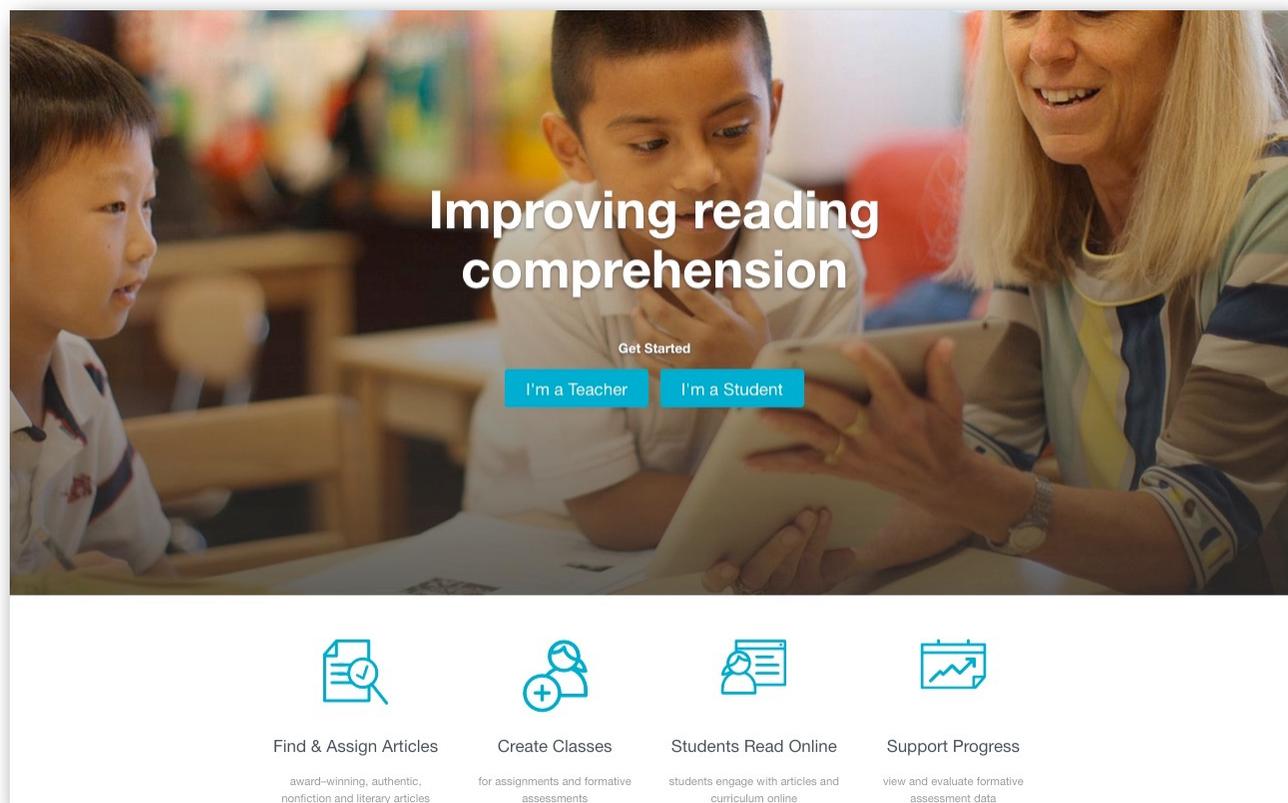
This is great for getting students to work more autonomously on their reading skills.

READING TOOLS

"The site looks like it will be better for higher level readers rather than beginners as many of the articles are quite complex."

ReadWorks Digital - http://digital.readworks.org/

Like many of the other tools this site helps teachers find ready made reading activities that they can assign to students. The site has ready prepared questions for the texts as well as vocabulary support.

ReadWorks also makes it very easy to print the articles for use in classrooms where there is limited internet connectivity.
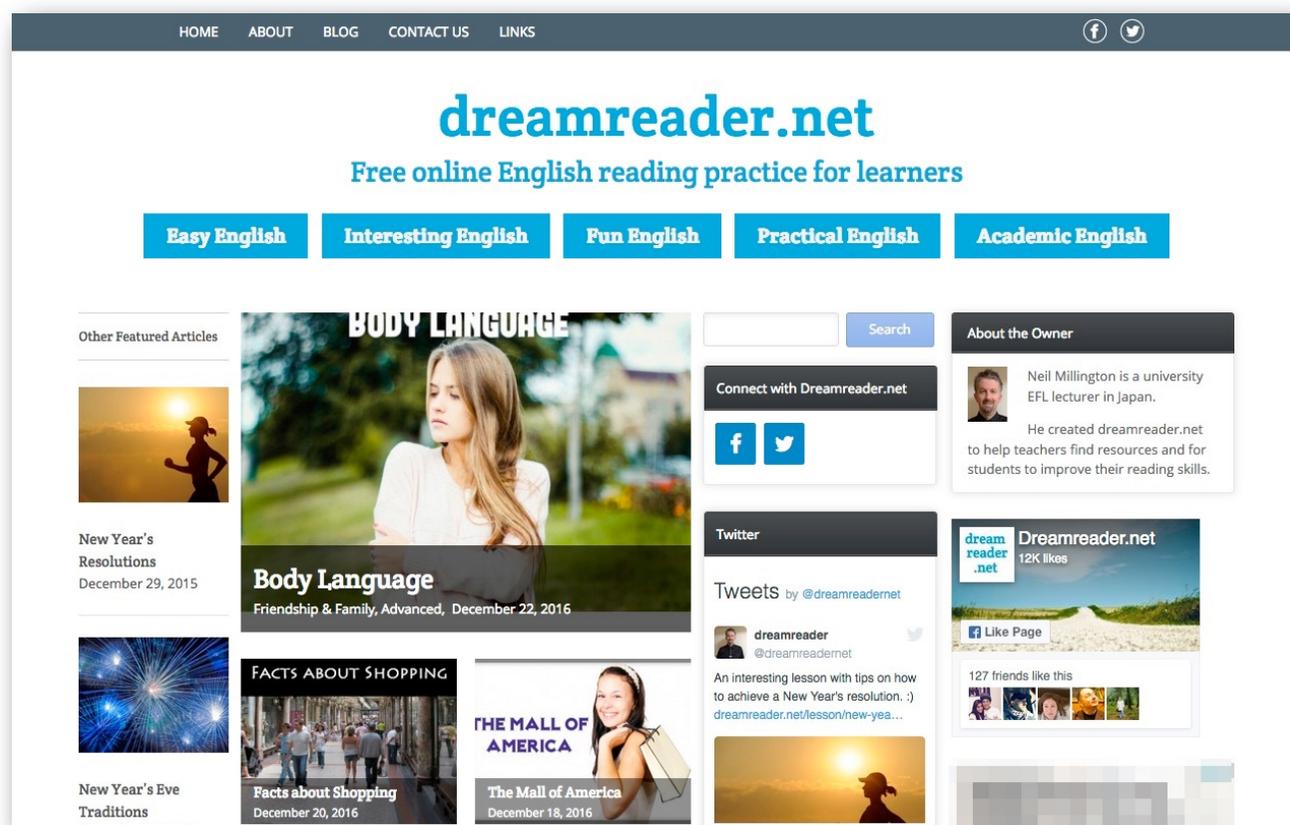
The site looks like it will be better for higher level readers rather than beginners as many of the articles are quite complex.

READING TOOLS

"This is a really useful free resource which is constantly growing."

DreamReader - http://dreamreader.net/

This site was designed specifically for English language learners and has a range of reading texts at different levels. Each text also has an interactive online quiz and an audio recording of the text.

The materials can also be downloaded as pdf and printed for use in the classroom. Each one also has a downloadable version of the audio file.
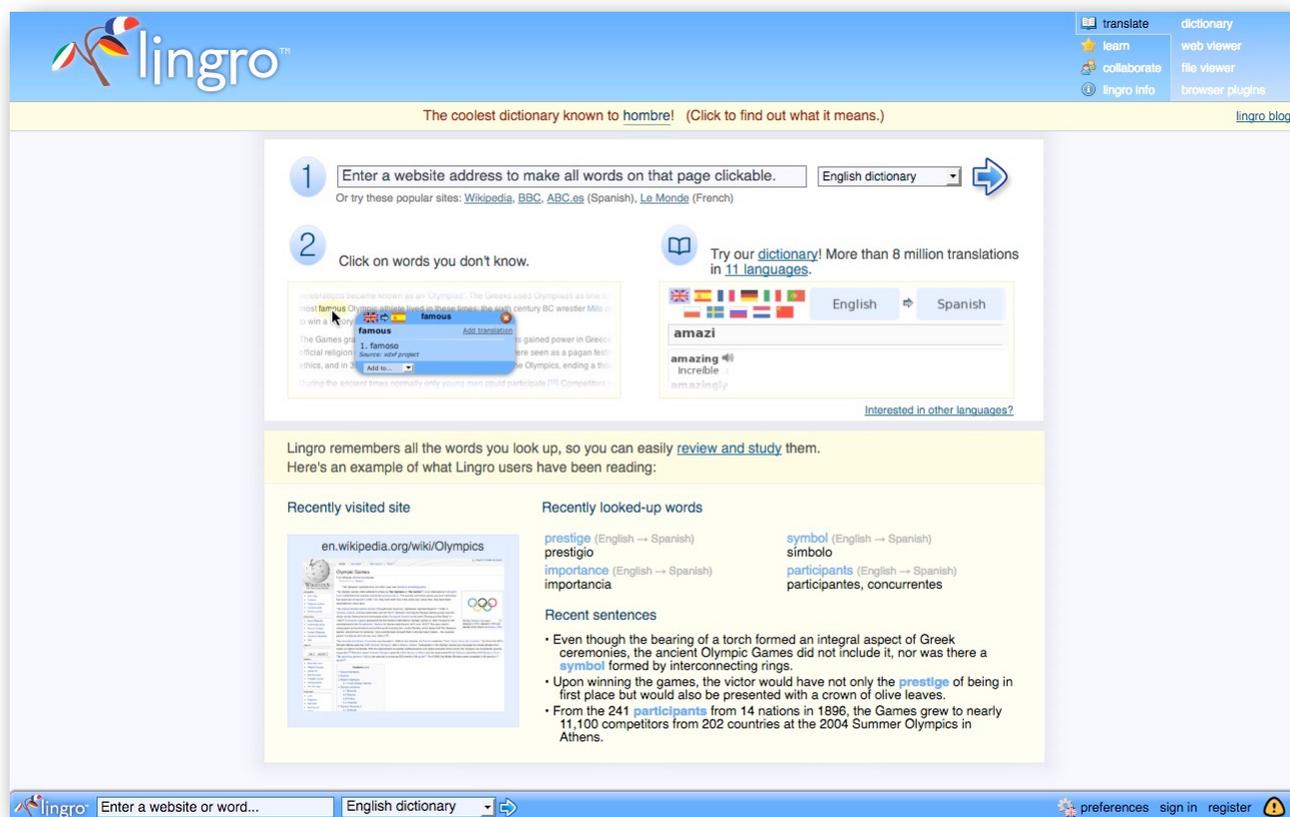
These materials are great for homework reading assignments or for use in the classroom. This is a really useful free resource which is constantly being up-dated.

READING TOOLS

"Used over time this can be a really powerful tool to help students develop their reading skills and vocabulary."

Lingro - http://lingro.com/

This is a tool that can be used to assist students with the reading of more challenging web based texts.

They simply add the URL of the text to Lingro and it overlays an interactive dictionary on the text. Students can then click on any word to get a dictionary definition or translation. The words they click on are collected in the Lingro 'history' and students can then add them to wordlists in the 'Learn' section of the site. The wordlists they create can then be converted into interactive flashcards for vocabulary revision.

The 'Sentence History' part of the site also stores a link to the original text where the student found the word and the sentence that it appeared in, so students also have an example sentence and information about context.
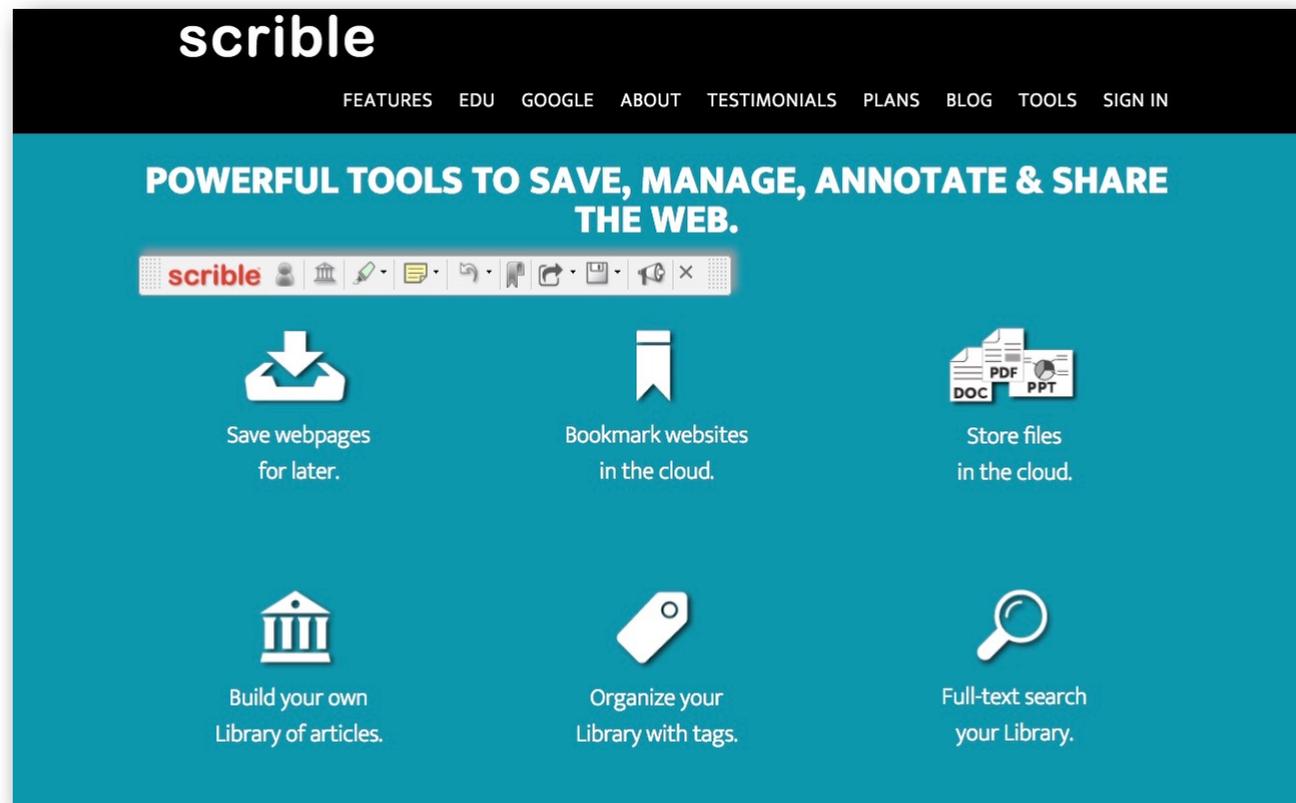
Used over time this can be a really powerful tool to help students develop their reading skills and vocabulary.

READING TOOLS

"This is a powerful tool for developing students collaborative digital study and research skills."

Scrible - https://www.scrible.com/

To use Scrible you need to instal a browser plugin. Scrible can be installed on most browsers including mobile versions.

Once installed it can be used while students read online. The toolbar enables student to annotate web based texts with sticky notes, highlighting, underlining and a range of other features. All of the annotated texts are stored in the student's library so they can them come back to the text and find and review their annotations. The texts can also be shared privately or through social media with a tutor or peer.

This is a powerful tool for developing students' collaborative digital study and research skills.

The other 8 chapters of this book are available from:

http://peacheypublications.com/