

After my students had passed FCE at the end of year 10 I faced the problem of choosing the right coursebook. It was not an easy decision for me as I wanted a lot of things combined in one. First of all, I felt it was important to develop their language skills further so I needed an advanced level book. Secondly, as motivated language learners who were planning on participating in different types of language Olympiads and contests I thought they would benefit more from a variety of task types than focusing on one exam format like IELTS or CAE. Thirdly, whatever interesting topics and unusual exam formats I wanted my students to work with I still needed to prepare them for the Russian National Exam, so learning to write essays had to be one of my priorities. I decided to involve my students in the selection process so I had them look through a few coursebooks and they voted for Gateway B2+. I was not sure at the time but decided to go along with their choice and never looked back. In my 20 odd years of teaching this is one of the best books I have used. Here are a few of the features I really appreciate about it:

- The book is well-organised and structured so it's easy for a teacher to plan their work. My students also appreciated reference materials for each section (e.g. Writing and Speaking Banks, Grammar Guides) and reference lists at the end of each unit which provide opportunities for self-study and revision.
- I have never liked 'your students will choose and learn the words they find important' approach so this book is an answer to my prayers. The authors have picked the vocabulary to work with. It is presented and practised in the Student's Book while the Workbook provides further practice and extension. Vocabulary work includes phrasal verbs, idioms and word formation.
- The units explore interesting topics like quirkology (have you ever heard of this science?) advertising techniques in the modern world and amazing things the human mind can do. Even if the topic looks obvious like Houses, the angle will surprise you. Do you expect to read about houses of the future at this level? What you get is Victorian Home life and it will turn out to be a much more exciting subject than you could imagine. With 'Click onto' sections related to history, psychology, literature, science and what not, the book does broaden students' (and teachers'!) horizons so you will never get bored.
- A wide range of task types is used when developing each skill. For example, in Speaking sections throughout the book students are taught to analyse statistics, make presentations, compare and describe photos, behave at job interviews and many other things. Some of them are exam tasks used in different international examinations, others may be useful in real-life situations.
- One of the most valuable components is online support. For each unit there are additional listening tasks and videos, games and revision exercises. When your students do the tasks they are checked automatically and you are informed of the score they get by mail. This wonderful feature allows you to extend your lessons and save your classroom time for speaking English we don't have enough time for, what with all that exam preparation.
- And there are indeed a lot of opportunities for speaking. All reading and listening tasks have pre- and follow-up speaking activities which encourage students to form and exchange their personal opinions on a variety of exciting subjects. These never fail to cause heated debates making students present their arguments, illustrate them with examples and think of counterarguments thus providing additional essay practice.
- The book does an amazingly good job developing writing skills. It teaches students a variety of writing tasks from stories to a covering letter, but essays are addressed to in several units teaching students to develop their ideas, select and present arguments, structure their writing and use a range of functional language properly.

To cut a long story short, I fell in love with Gateway B2+ so I'm really looking forward to using other levels of Gateway. Meanwhile I am sending you some of the writing pieces my Year 11 students have done this year. Some of the topics are different from suggested in the book but they were all inspired by the preparation exercises there. For instance, in Unit 1 we changed the story task into 'We, too, have feelings'. The idea was to show what life was like seen through the eyes of an animal or an inanimate object.

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