

***The Working Class: Poverty, education and alternative voices* by Ian Gilbert, Independent Thinking Press, Crown House Publishing Ltd, Camarthen, UK. (2018) ISBN 978-178135278-6**

Good, accessible books that deal with the relationship between social class and education in both a sociological and historical way are comparatively rare. I liked this book a lot and I think that it represents an original contribution to the literature around social class and education in the UK. There are a number of things to recommend it. Firstly, it has a clear sense of who its readership is—educators as broadly understood: teachers, youth workers etc. Thus, although the book makes use of a range of theoretical sources—Bourdieu, Foucault among others—where theory is used it is clearly explained and fully exemplified within the chapters. It does not assume that readers are already steeped in the theoretical canons. A second plus of the book is that the chapters come from a wide range of contributors with quite different backgrounds in academia, schools, the arts. This enables a range of different voices to be heard and also offers insights into the multiplicity of different sites of class social reproduction. A third strength of the book is that, although it is an edited volume with quite a broad and diverse range of contributors, there is a coherent narrative voice to bind the collection together. One way in which this is done is by the use of an editorial introduction to each chapter that links it with the previous one. A second way that is achieved is through the tone of the book, the predominant shade of which is a real burning sense of anger at the persistence of the class injustices it documents. I am slightly ambivalent about this last point because, although I think this makes it an invigorating and stimulating read, there are some places within the book where this anger tips closer to polemic than argument. This, though, is only a relatively moderate criticism of a very good book.

As a lecturer in Education Studies, I would say that this is a perfect text for any course in Education Studies or related areas such as sociology. For example, I teach upon a first-year undergraduate module that examines the history of the English education system from the passing of the 1870 Education Reform Act until the present day. This text would be very suitable, therefore, to those students as its chapters deal with both historical and

sociological themes in relation to education. More generally, I believe that this text is appropriate for undergraduates at levels 4 and 5 (first and second year undergraduates) for the reasons that I have outlined above: its assumption of a general practitioner readership rather than an academic specialist one means that it deals with theory in a way that is very accessible to students in the first or second year of their degree.

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