

'Beowulf is lit' – could ChatGPT really write good book blurbs?

Level 2: Intermediate / Upper-Intermediate – Teacher's notes

Article summary: Bookwire has included ChatGPT on their book platform to write blurbs and endorsements. The author experimented with the chatbot to see what it could do, creating some entertaining (but cliché) texts.

Time: 60–90 minutes (depending on the time to use a chatbot in class)

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Phrasal verbs

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

Key:

1. *moral*
2. *navigate, navigates*
3. *epic*
4. *masterpiece*
5. *plot*
6. *mind-blowing*
7. *breathless*
8. *stunned*
9. *appreciates*
10. *passable*
11. *cliché, clichés*
12. *cringeworthy*

As an extension to help students learn the new words, ask them to write a word that they associate with each word on a random place on a blank page. This can be an example of the word, a synonym, or a personal association. Then have students work in pairs and guess or explain their word sets.

1. Warmer

- a. This activity aims to introduce the books/texts mentioned in the article and engage students in the topic.

Key:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. <i>c</i> | 5. <i>g</i> |
| 2. <i>f</i> | 6. <i>b</i> |
| 3. <i>a</i> | 7. <i>d</i> |
| 4. <i>e</i> | |

- b. You can note down emergent language related to the theme on the board. Ask students to reflect on what they know about these books and ChatGPT. Then get them to predict the answer to the question in the article title.

2. Key words

- a. Students can complete the activity individually or in pairs. If pressed for time, divide the class into two groups and ask each group to complete half of the items (1–6 or 7–12) and then compare their answers in pairs before regrouping and sharing their answers with someone who completed the other items.

3. Comprehension check

- a. Ask students to work individually to answer the questions and then compare their answers in pairs or small groups. Remind students that they are looking for names written with capital letters.

Key:

1. *Bookwire*
2. *ChatGPT*
3. *The Society of Authors*
4. *George Eliot*
5. *Gen Z*
6. *Beowulf*
7. *The Bible*
8. *Ulysses*
9. *Beloved*
10. *It Ends With Us*

4. Key language

- a. Ask students to work in pairs. Check answers with the whole class.

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Key:

1. *experiment with*
2. *assume responsibility for*
3. *play around with*
4. *appeal to*
5. *take down*
6. *slap on*
7. *come up with*
8. *spit out*

- b. Ask students to work in pairs to complete the questions. Check answers with the whole class. Then ask students to discuss the questions in small groups.

Key:

1. *appeal to*
2. *spit out*
3. *playing around with*
4. *take down*
5. *slapped on/onto*
6. *assume responsibility for*
7. *experiment with*

5. Discussion

- a. Allow students time to note their ideas and encourage them to explain their answers. Ask them to discuss the questions in small groups. Elicit ideas from the whole class.

6. In your own words

- a. If students cannot do this in class, set this for homework. If students cannot access a chatbot site, ask them to write their own blurb. Remind students that they need to keep the instructions they gave the chatbot, the generated text (or their own first draft), and their final edited version.
- b. Low-tech version: put students into groups and ask them to read their blurbs and guess the book titles.

Higher-tech version: get students to share their generated and edited blurbs on an online board such as Jamboard.