

Teaching English | Lesson plans

Hard Times (Nothing but Facts, Sir!)

Level: B1+

Time: 60 minutes as a lesson/90 minutes as a teacher training session

Main aims: To encourage students to relate reading and listening passages to

their own experience, as a way of developing critical skills.

(If used for teacher training) To focus trainees on the benefits of a

communicative methodology.

Subsidiary aims: To develop skills of listening and reading for gist, and reading for

detail.

(If used for teacher training) To revise staging of receptive skills

lessons.

Suggested timetable fit: (a) To fit with a lesson centred around civil law generally, or divorce

law in particular (especially for legal English students).

(b) To fit with other lesson(s) on topic of divorce, or changing social

views for general English students.

Materials: 2 worksheets per student.

Procedure:

Stage and stage aim(s)	Timing	Interaction	Procedure
Visualisation (to activate students memories to allow for personalisation of topic)	10	Τ	Students need to relax. Ask them to close eyes, maybe sit back, or heads on arms on desks in front of them. If a small group in a carpeted room, even lie down? Play very soft, quiet music? Use a version of the following, speaking slowly, with pauses. Adapt for local circumstances. 'Imagine you are back at school. You are a student again. Where was your school? How did you go there every day? What did you wear? You're in a classroom. You're learning a foreign language. What is it? English? French? German? Who is your teacher? What does he or she look like? Do you like your teacher? Who is in the class with you? Who are your friends? What do you do in the class? Do you study grammar? Do you read aloud? Do you write sentences? Do you speak? In what language do you speak? How do you feel in this lesson? Do you enjoy it? How do you feel about the foreign language? Do you want to learn it? Why? Why not?' Bring students back to the present. Ask them to stretch. Now, they have 4 minutes to write everything they can remember about their language classes.

www.teachingenglish.org.uk © BBC | British Council 2012



Teaching**English** | Lesson plans

	1		
		st	
Speaking (to share	10	st - st	Sts in groups of 4 or so discuss their experiences, to identify similarities and differences
experiences in topic of the listening)		T - st	Brief feedback, and summary of general experience for all present (if generalizable) or main differences (if there are such).
Listening for gist (to compare to own experiences)	10	st – st	Tell sts they will listen to a passage about school. What do they think this school is like? What are the teachers like? What do the students do? Play listening (ask if 2 nd listening is needed), same groups discuss the educational environment drawn, and compare/contrast to their own experiences. Each group briefly reports back in feedback. Inform the group that this was a passage from Hard Times by Charles Dickens. His view of education seems to have been somewhat progressive, as witnessed by his mocking the prevailing view of its being purely the passing on of knowledge (facts).
Reading for gist (to help sts to an overview of the passage)	10	st st-st	Give out materials 1, and direct sts to the gist question of exercise 1. Give sts 4 minutes for the reading and 3 for pair discussion, encouraging them to refer to the text in justifying answers. Feedback. Clearly, the gentlemen are only interested in what is useful/utilitarian, while Sissy is interested in what is pleasant, in what she can connect with emotionally.
Reading for detail (to help with a deeper understanding of the text)	10	st st - st	Direct students to exercise 2, and give them 4 minutes to complete. Pairs check before feedback. See recommended answers below.
Speaking (to relate the reading to students own experience)	10	st - st	Ask sts, in groups, to make a list of activities that they do in their classes (as students or as teachers, depending on group) that would be unlikely to feature in Mr Gradgrind's school. Class feedback, what do the students think are the advantages of these activities?
Lesson analysis (if this is a	20+	st – st	Groups of three or four identify the stages of the lesson that has been done. Trainer monitors and guides with questions about the lesson.
training session with teachers, pre- service or in- service)		T - st	Hand out materials 2 and conduct feedback. Elicit as much as possible. See version of materials 2 below, with comments. If this has potential to develop into discussion of methodological points and appropriate classroom activity types, let it, and then the reading in materials 3 can be given out to read at home.
Reading (to wrap up the topic)	10-	st	Handout materials 3. Ask students to answer 'What does Dickens think of teacher education? Do you agree?' Short feedback.
		T - st	



Teaching English | Lesson plans

Exercise 2: answers

Are the following statements true, false, or impossible to judge from the passage? Write T or F or ? next to each statement.

- 1. The students are practised at guessing what the teacher wants them to say.
 - T. The students respond to Mr Bounderby's expression, and quickly learn that he asks questions expecting a 'no' answer.
- 2. Only Sissy and a few students like flowers. Most of the students don't.
 - ? Most students answer 'no' because they think it's the expected answer. Their answer has nothing to do with their own views.
- 3. The two gentlemen see 'fancy' as the opposite of 'fact', and oppose it.

Τ

- 4. The two gentlemen have plain white plates at home.
 - ? They recommend plain, undecorated plates, so probably have them at home (although they <u>could</u> be terrible hypocrites, and have fancy decorations). And, while white is very likely, they may be plain blue plates. So, very likely true, but we can't know.
- 5. The two gentlemen do not admit there could be any valid view other than their own.
 - T. This is why they identify their view with 'taste', they recognise no other possible choice.



Stages of a Reading Lesson

FOCUS ON THE TOPIC

Activity or discussion to focus on the topic of the lesson.



PRE-TEACH SELECTED VOCABULARY

Present words (as few as possible, and max c. 8) which students need to complete the tasks and/or understand the main ideas of the text.



SET GIST TASK

Set a task that concerns the main idea of the entire text, or ask students to read to see if their earlier predictions regarding content were correct. Set a time limit.



TEXT

Students read while the teacher monitors (to check the task is being carried out correctly, and to judge student performance of the task).



FEEDBACK

Students check answers in pairs or groups, and then as a class.



SET TASKS FOR DETAILED READING

Give students a task focussing on detailed information before they read again. Ideally this involves processing the text, for example combining information from two parts of the text to arrive at a conclusion, or inferencing.



TEXT

Students read while the teacher monitors (as above).



FEEDBACK

Students check answers in pairs or groups, and then as a class. Teacher & students clarify any problems in the text



EXTENSION TASK Usually involving the productive skills (speaking or writing) in a reaction to the text, or building on information within the text.

Comment [R1]: This was done thoroughly. First, there was the visualisation, followed by writing and discussion. The listening was in a way a lead in to the reading but, as a receptive skills text itself, it had its own procedure as well, in that the focus worked as a focus for the listening, and there were gist questions.

Comment [R2]: This is not covered in the lesson plan, but, depending on your students/trainees, you may care to introduce such a stage. The important point is to choose words which, if not understood, will spoil the chance of task completion, rather than just a collection of hard words.

Comment [R3]: Note how the gist task asks for an understanding of the text overall. Too often a 'gist' question in fact asks for one detail from the text.

Set a time to force fast reading, to develop this particular skill.

Comment [R4]: Monitoring is important, to make sure the students have understood what the task requires of them, and then to see how they are going, as a preparation for how you handle feedback.

Comment [R5]: Give students a chance to compare answers before putting anyone on the spot.

Comment [R6]: In published materials (course books) the detailed reading tends to be fairly well designed. Do vary tasks, so that sometimes scanning is involved, sometimes making an inference, etc...

Comment [R7]: Some language work may come before this, if there is something interesting to highlight, but this is a skills lesson, not a language lesson, so don't such a stage take over.

www.teachingenglish.org.uk © BBC | British Council 2012