

A Tale of Two Cities (Opening)

- Level:** B1+
- Time:** 60 minutes
- Main aim:** To encourage students to use existing knowledge in deducing meaning from textual context.
- Subsidiary aims:** For students to practise listening for detail.
For students to practice expressing meaning through intonation.
- Suggested timetable fit:** (a) Before/After a lesson which touches on literature.
(b) After a lesson on opposites.
- Materials:** Sentence matching (copied on different coloured paper, and cut up); Opposites exercise; listening text (audio file)

Procedure:

Stage and stage aim(s)	Timing	Interaction	Procedure
Focus on topic	10	T – st st – st T - st	Ask sts what sort of books they like reading. Do they remember any books (English or native language) with memorable/dramatic/poetic openings? Sts discuss books/openings they have enjoyed in groups of 3 or 4. Feedback
Language work (to focus sts on opposites)	10	st st - st T - st	Handout exercise 1. Give 3 or 4 minutes for individual work Give further 2 or 3 minutes for pairs/3s to check/share answers Class feedback (see answers below, and a couple of points for extension of the knowledge)
Text matching (to use language knowledge, opposites, to understand textual links)	10	st – st T - st	Give groups of students (3s or 4s) a set of materials 1a & 1b. Each should be copied on different coloured paper (eg white and blue) and cut up along the lines. Sts match a white with a blue. Do one as an example. Give out all of materials 1b, but only 'It was the best of times' from 1a. Ask sts to match. Once they have done this, give out the rest of 1a. Feedback, asking for justifications and dealing with problem words (eg 'epoch' approx. = 'age')
Listening	5	T-st st-st	Ask the groups to guess which order the pairs of sentences appear in, and to place them in that order. Play the recording (to 'the other way', then pause) and let students move into what they think is the correct order. Allow different groups to compare to check their answers. If necessary, play a second time, then

			confirm the order in feedback.
Class Discussion (to bring meaning out of passage)	5	T - st	<p>The meaning of the opening is not necessarily obvious from the matched sentence fragments, and the rest of the first paragraph, where the meaning becomes clear, is not at all simple.</p> <p>Still, ask the students what they think Dickens is saying here. Allow 2/3 minutes for discussion, more if the students get into this. Otherwise, bring class back to plenary and use leading questions such as:</p> <p>Did people agree whether it was a good time or a bad time? (etc) Did they think it was a unique (special) time? If they thought it was bad, was it <i>very</i> bad/the worst, or just a bit bad? Do people think they are the cleverest, and most modern and best now? Did they think the same 10 years ago? 20 years ago? 100 years ago?</p> <p>Lead sts to understanding that people thought the time unique, in the same way people always think. Play entire listening, and highlight the emphasised phrase 'so far like the present period'</p>
Speaking (focus on accuracy)	20	T – st st - st	<p>Write 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times' on the board. Demonstrate reading it with exaggerated intonation, pitch, facial expression to convey meaning and contrast.</p> <p>Invite student to do this with you, you read first half, student reads second half, then another student, then a student to do first half, and you second, and again, then 2 students in open pairs, and then 2 more.</p> <p>Students now practice entire passage (until 'going the other way') with one student taking the first half of each pair, the other student the second. Then they swap. Allow some time for performance at the end, with volunteer pairs.</p> <p>If time allows, invite students to create new sentences along the same model.</p>

Exercise 1: answers

