

A House in the Country

Introduction

1. Teachers' Notes



The Project. The BritLit project was started in 2002 with the intention of providing Portuguese teachers of English in the state sector additional resource material for the extensive reading requirements of years 10 and 11. It is a joint venture between the British Council in Portugal and APPI (Associação Portuguesa de Professores de Inglês). While aimed at the Portuguese market, the usefulness of the project as an international model is recognised and generic versions of the resources kits are being developed.

The Resource Kits. Much of the material provided is intended to be used with mixed ability classes and while the input from the materials is the same, the output from the students will vary considerably. Other materials are generally classed according to their degree of difficulty using the ALTE levels now adopted by many European countries through the Council of Europe as benchmark criteria for language assessment. (http://www.alte.org/can_do/cef.cfm). The resource kits provide a never-ending source of material for the teacher inasmuch as teachers are asked to contribute their own experiences and ideas to the project; we would like to see the materials mutate and mature with use. One of the advantages of using an electronic form is that each section can easily be personalised; we would be interested to see examples of this approach.

This Kit. The materials presented for class work on Romesh Gunsekera's short story 'A House in the Country' are intended for the development of language development and cultural understanding rather than as a source of literary study. There are four parts: **Characterisation, Context, Word Work, After Reading**, plus a **teachers key**. As with all other BritLit productions, this is called a 'kit' to emphasise the fact that you, the teacher, are expected to assemble the component parts yourself, using the parts you require in the order you prefer. This is not, therefore, a course, simply a resource which can be picked over with some items used and others discarded. For this reason, each worksheet or worksheets within a sub-heading stand alone, and do not require work to have been done on any other worksheet. It is intended that the order in which the work is done is largely up to the teacher responding to the needs of their class. However, we would make the following suggestions:

- Some of the worksheets have been designed with preparation for reading the text in mind. In other words, the intention is that these worksheets are to be used **before** the students read the text. The reason is simply that by quoting from the text and dealing with language and content piecemeal in these sections, we assume that this will help the student to a more fluent reading of the text, without the need to break off and consult for meaning.
- We advise that the worksheet 'Context: Getting Started' should, as the title suggests, be used first as it will prepare students for the task ahead.
- We also advise that all the work in the section 'Characterisation' is done before the students are asked to read the complete text. This section is

designed to 'fast-track' students into an appreciation of the situation the characters in the story find themselves in.

- The rest of the work in the 'Context' section can be done either before or after the text has been read, as can the work in 'Word Work', although we would recommend that this latter section is tackled after the text has been read.
- As the title suggests, the section 'After Reading' is to be tackled once all the other work has been completed. It attempts to 'wrap up' the work on the story, and to look forward to alternative texts.
- Many worksheets provide links to sites that are relevant to the work being presented and it is assumed that teachers will develop their own materials from these links. Please note, however, that some material may be subject to copyright restrictions, over which the BritLit Project has no control. Please help us by reporting any broken or disused links.
- Copyright permission has been obtained where applicable. All BritLit material is photocopiable.

We very much welcome your contribution to the project. Much of the material in the current kit has been contributed by state school teachers working in collaboration with the project team and we invite you to contribute your ideas and experience so that future versions of this material will present an even wider choice of opportunities for students to explore language and culture through literature.

A Brief Summary of the Story Ray returns to his native Colombo, Sri Lanka, after some years working in London. He enlists the help of a local man, Siri, to help him build his house in the town. The relationship between the two men straddles different times and cultures, and Ray struggles to cope with it. A project which Ray dreams up involves building a house in the country, partly to resolve his dilemma about his relationship with Siri, but also to come to terms with his return to Sri Lanka. These are troubles times, and an incident brings the civil unrest close to home, provoking a disturbing revelation from Siri. This rather dark, introspective story is about our place in the world around us, and reminds us how fragile our grip on it is.

2. Acknowledgements

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3. Index

Section	Worksheet	Description	ALTE*
Characterisation	Characterisation	9 pages of worksheets introducing students to the 2 main characters through quotations from the text; activities include adjective matching, dialogue completion, character assessment & reading comprehension	B1.2 / B2.1
Context	A Brief History	A quick history of Sri Lanka, starting with a quiz and followed by a text	B1
	Background Reading	Multiple matching exercise with extensive reading. A series of short articles from different sources about Sri Lanka	B1.2
	English from the Sub-Continent	A look at the differences between the kind of English spoken in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh and British English.	B1
	A Poem	A poem in 'Sri Lankan' English - to be completed by the students - which extols the value of learning English!	B1
	Civil War	A look at eye witness accounts of situations in war-torn Northern Ireland	B2
	Civil War - A Review	Review of a film about the Sri Lankan civil war as seen through the eyes of a Sri Lankan film maker	B1.2 / B2.1
	A Biography	Text about the author with gap fill plus MCQs	B1.2 / B2.1
Word Work	Language in Use: 'Past or present perfect?'	Extracts reordering the story mean these tenses have to be used in different ways	B1 / B2
	Language in Use: '...was used to...' '...got used to...'	Looking at difference in use of these two forms, using the text as the basis	B1 / B2
	Language in Use '...used to...'	A further look at 'used' in another easy-to-confuse situation. Examples taken from text	
	Glossary	Key words from text presented in alphabetical order, English-English	
	Glossary	Key words from text presented in alphabetical order, English-Portuguese	
After Reading	Comprehension	Final check on understanding text, through reordering paragraphs of a summary. A second, more difficult exercise, requires a cloze of a summary to be completed	B1 / B2
	Further Reading	A look at a further text, one of the experiences of an immigrant to London, to take the enquiring mind a step further. Short story by Richard Tromans.	B2.1
Key	Key	Answers to exercises contained in the kit, plus a page of links gathered together	

*ALTE: Key stage levels as determined by the Council of Europe
http://www.alte.org/can_do/cef.cfm