

Dogs: Teacher's notes and tips - upper intermediate

1 Pre-reading tasks

- a Read out the following names: *Snowy, Fluffy, Lassie, Buddy, Sirius* and *2006* (not really a name!) and ask students if they can tell you:
- what connects the names.
 - who or what the names belong to.

Tip: adapt the task for your students

If you think that this is too difficult for the students, you could ask them to name two cartoon dogs, two film star dogs and / or two famous dogs; or simply change the names above to more appropriate ones.

- b Feedback: *They are all dogs - Snowy was Tintin's dog, Fluffy was the three-headed dog that protected the Philosopher's Stone in the Harry Potter film / book, Lassie was the star of many films, Buddy was Presidents Clinton's dog (that got killed by a car), Sirius is a dog star and 2006 is the Chinese Year of the Dog. Can the students guess the theme of the reading?*
- c Give each student a copy of the task sheet and ask them to do question 1 in pairs.
- d Feedback: **a** *an unhappy life, full of problems* **b** *a situation in business, politics etc where there is a lot of competition and people are willing to harm each other in order to succeed* **c** *to cause you trouble for a long time*
- e There are other dog idioms / expressions. See if your students know any more and can explain them. Also, you may want to add some different ones.
- f Ask students to look at the paragraph headings in question 2 and to say if they think the article will be a positive one about dogs, or a negative one.
- g Then ask them to work in pairs and write down vocabulary they think they will come across in the different paragraphs - nouns, verbs, phrases etc.
- h Do a quick feedback and compare ideas.

Tip: use headings

Headings are very useful. Here they are used to prepare students for the kind of words they would expect to find in such a text, and to predict the attitude of the writer. Headings also get the students thinking about the topic - all of which helps students to be better readers. Encourage them to always look at headings, as these will often give clues about the content.

2 First reading tasks

- a Give each student a copy of the reading. They need to read as quickly as possible to:
- confirm whether it's positive text about dogs or not (*it is*).
 - to note how many of their predicted words are in the text.
- b See which pair had most of their words in the text.

Tip: motivate students to read more quickly

Remind students that they will get the general idea of a text more easily if they read quickly, and that they will always get another chance to read again more slowly.

3 Second reading tasks

- a Now students can read again to do the vocabulary exercise in question 3.

Tip: prevent over-dependence on dictionaries

Really encourage students to work out the meaning of words without resorting to a dictionary - there are plenty of clues provided in the text to help them.

- b Feedback (Nouns: *mutt, mongrel, pet, canine, puppy, stray* Verbs: *guard, herd, hunt, wag (their tail), sniff, bark*).

4 Post-reading tasks - vocabulary

Note: You may want to do questions 4 and 5 after the speaking, or for homework.

- a Ask students to do the matching task on their own first and then to compare their ideas with a partner.
b Feedback: **a4, b6, c2, d5, e1, f3**.
c These verbs are commonly used and it's useful to highlight them at this level.
d Feedback: **a barked b snarled c whined d howling** (Note - you can also say to howl with laughter) **e growled f snapping**.

Tip: be culturally aware

In some cultures, dogs have negative connotations and the idea that words associated with dogs can be used to describe humans may seem inappropriate. *You're barking (mad)* may be a grave insult to someone rather than a humorous rebuke.

4 Post-reading tasks - speaking

- a Ask students to decide in their pairs which dog from the text they think is the best and to share their idea with other students. Perhaps have a vote and see which is the most popular one, and why.
b Then ask students to look at question 6 and discuss the opinions in the reading.

Tip: don't let students be passive readers

Just because opinions are expressed in a text it doesn't necessarily mean they are correct or that a reader should agree with them. Encourage students to react to comments made especially as this is a task that reflects real-life. Is the writer too sentimental about dogs? Is Bertie really intelligent or just instinctive? Do all the students like dogs? If not, why not?

- c Finally, ask students if they know any stories of dogs, or other animals, that have saved people's lives. What happened?