

Level: Pre-intermediate (A2)

Age: Teenagers

Time: This lesson can be divided up in various ways to suit the time you have with your students. Below are two time options which you can choose from depending on the length of your class. However, these are just suggestions and there are plenty of other ways you could divide the lesson up.

90 minutes – Complete all activities in Hooked on soaps and Create a soap

60 minutes – Complete all activities in Hooked on soaps

Note: Create a soap can be spread over more than one lesson.

Summary: This lesson is divided into two sections: Hooked on soaps and Create a soap. In this lesson, students will:

1. read about soap operas;
2. look at a soap opera setting;
3. write a scene from a soap;
4. perform and record the scene.

Key skills: reading, writing, speaking

Subskills: history of soap operas, prepositions of place, writing a dialogue

Materials: one copy of Hooked on soaps and Create a soap per student

HOOKED ON SOAPS

1. Ask students this question:

What do Orlando Bloom, Kylie Minogue, Demi Moore, Jude Law, Meg Ryan, Kate Winslet and Robin Wright Penn all have in common?

If they say, *They are all actors*, tell them that is right but that's not the answer you're looking for. What else do they have in common? (Answer: They all appeared in soap operas before they became famous.)

2. Do your students watch television soap operas? How many soaps can they name? Tell them to write down the titles of as many as they can on a piece of paper. Which student has the longest list? Check the titles of the different series and write a definitive list on the board. How many of the soaps on the board do the students watch? Which is the best? Which is the worst?

3. Explain that they are going to read a text about soap operas. Hand out Hooked on soaps worksheets 1 and 2 and focus on the 12 questions. Give each student or pair of students one or more of the 12 questions and tell them to find the corresponding text (how many questions you give each student / pair will depend on the size of your class). They must then read their section of the text and remember as much information as possible. Check each student / pair of students has the correct answer before continuing.

4. When the class has finished the task, tell the students to turn the text over. Go through the questions

and encourage the students to explain what they have read to the rest of the class. Are they surprised by anything they read?

Key: 1. g; 2. l; 3. c; 4. a; 5. h; 6. j; 7. f; 8. d; 9. i; 10. k; 11. e; 12. b

5. Soaps often take place on one street or in one area of a town or city. Tell students to look at the illustration on Hooked on soaps worksheet 3. Explain that you are going to write a text on the board. They must read the text and work out where eight different soap families live. They write their answers in the spaces on the illustration.

- The Metcalfs live opposite the Clandfields.
- The Duncans live next door to the Zingers.
- The Holleys live between the Fleischers and the Clandfields.
- The Fleischers live next door to the Luthis.
- The Kennedys live opposite the Holleys and next to the Metcalfs.
- The Duncans live opposite the Luthis.

6. Get students to compare in pairs. Then, check through the answers together.

Key: 1. the Zingers; 2. the Metcalfs; 3. the Kennedys; 4. the Luthis; 5. the Fleischers; 6. the Holleys; 7. the Clandfields; 8. the Duncans

7. Draw the students' attention towards the Phrasebook on the worksheet. Read through it with

them, dealing with any unknown vocabulary. Then, get students to talk to their partner about where they live, using the language in the box. If time allows, ask each student to tell you something about where their partner lives.

CREATE A SOAP

1. Tell students they are going to create their own soap opera. Hand out the Create a soap worksheet and tell the students to look at the picture. They should then read the first of the five steps that explain how to create a soap. They think of a name for the location and then take a vote on which student in the class has the best name. They write the winning name above the picture.
2. Split the class into small groups. All of the groups now have to choose a house in which to live. Only one group can live in each house. If they can't agree, then they must let you decide for them. The students in each group are the members of the household / family they have chosen. They now follow the rest of the instructions to create their soap.

This activity can be spread over two or three classes. In the first class, students do the first steps. In the next class, they write the scene. In the final class, they rehearse and then perform their scenes. You could record the scenes and then watch them together with the students.

Homework task

Students should watch a scene from an English-language soap opera. Either ask *them* to choose one (by watching a soap on TV or finding a scene online), or choose a scene yourself (from YouTube, for example) and give them the link. They should note down:

- the relationships between the characters;
- what is happening in the scene;
- what makes it exciting / interesting to watch;
- any interesting language they hear;
- any language they are unsure of and want to ask you about.

Next lesson, they feed back on what they saw.

HOOKED ON SOAPS

All about soap operas

1. Match these 12 questions with the 12 facts, a–l.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Why do people love soaps? | 7. What's a cliffhanger? |
| 2. Are soaps good for your health? | 8. What are the ingredients of a successful soap? |
| 3. Have soaps always been popular? | 9. Are soaps dangerous? |
| 4. Why are they called soap operas? | 10. Can soaps be educational? |
| 5. How do they become a part of our daily lives? | 11. How many character types does a soap need? |
| 6. Can soaps help us solve problems? | 12. Who created the first soap opera? |



- a. In the 1930s, radio stations in the United States produced dramas created specifically for housewives. Many of the advertisers were selling soap products and soon the dramas became known as soap operas.
- b. Although we associate soap operas with the 20th century, Charles Dickens probably wrote the first one in 1836 with *The Pickwick Papers*. These were stories printed at regular intervals with characters that readers could identify with.
- c. When Dickens started *The Pickwick Papers*, he printed 400 copies but was soon selling 40,000 copies. Soaps are still big business today. A television soap such as *The Bold and Beautiful* airs in nearly 100 countries with more than 350 million viewers daily.
- d. People need to be able to identify with the characters and situations in a soap, and relate what they see to their own lives. Everything needs to be exaggerated slightly to make the people and their lives more exciting than real life.
- e. A good soap needs friction, with characters of different ages involved in dramatic situations. According to the editor of *Inside Soap* magazine, all successful soaps use the same six or seven character types. They're usually extreme examples of people we see every day.



- f. Soaps need a way to make sure that people will watch the next episode. An episode always needs to end with a dramatic moment that won't be resolved until the next episode. What will happen next? Will the couple get together? Will the hero be rescued? This is called a cliffhanger.
- g. We are all interested in other people's lives and soaps are an entertaining way to see into the lives of ordinary people. Soaps are also something that can be shared. We can talk about soaps at school or at work with friends, sharing predictions and opinions.
- h. They are usually on at the same time of day so they become part of our daily routine. Families often watch soaps together at mealtimes so they can talk about what's happening to the characters.
- i. Soaps can be addictive and can have a negative effect on people. When people become addicted to soaps, they often can't distinguish between fact and fiction. Soaps make life seem exciting, so they can depress people who think their own lives are boring in comparison.
- j. Soaps help us survive in the world by showing us situations that we might have to deal with. They inform their audience about a range of issues. Talking about your own problems can be difficult, so it's often easier to talk about your own problems by talking about soap opera problems.
- k. In a survey of British teenagers and adults, it was discovered that a majority of people got their information about AIDS from a soap opera. A radio soap in Kenya aimed to raise awareness of issues by including storylines about health, the use of water and AIDS.
- l. Gossiping about soaps is popular and very healthy. Studies show that, when people are involved in a soap, they are actively interpreting storylines and themes. It also helps them to communicate with people around them.



Soapland!



Hooked on soaps worksheet 3

PHRASEBOOK

Where you live

Describing your home

- I live in a basement / ground-floor / first-floor flat.
- It's in a small / large block of flats.
- I live in a detached / semi-detached / terraced house.
- It's on a small / long, quiet / noisy street.
- It's in a cul-de-sac.
- It's in the middle of nowhere.

Describing where your neighbours live in relation to you

- We live opposite ...

- Right across from us, ...

- ... live right next door to us.

- Below us, ...

- Above us, ...

- Our nearest neighbours live far away.

Talking about your neighbours

- Our next-door neighbours are (quite / really) friendly / a nuisance.
- People on our street / in our block of flats all know each other.
- We don't really know any of our neighbours.



CREATE A SOAP



Welcome to

.....

Create a soap worksheet

1. Location

The first thing you need to make a soap opera is a location. Look at the picture. This is the location of the soap you are going to write. Give the location a name.

2. Characters

Imagine that you live in one of the houses on the soap opera. Choose one of the houses and then decide which member of the family / household you want to be. Decide what type of character you are and what problems you presently have.

3. Script

Look again at the ingredients of a successful soap opera (from the text) and write a scene for an episode, making sure you include lots of drama, an educational message and a cliffhanger.

4. Catchphrase

Your scene must use at least three of the following catchphrases. A catchphrase is a phrase that a particular character often says.

- How about a nice cup of tea?
- That's i-i-i-i-credible!
- You're kidding me!
- I just thought of something interesting.
- Now, what were you saying?
- It's going to rain. It always rains on Tuesdays.
- You fool! You stupid idiot!
- You think you're so clever, don't you?
- Five times a week, usually.
- Let's talk about it this evening.
- Not a lot of people know that.
- It's the truth, I promise.
- I've got one of my headaches.
- You never listen when I'm talking to you.
- I'm going to say this once and once only.
- Don't you ever talk to me like that again!
- What exactly are you trying to say?
- All I want is for you to be happy.

5. When your scene is ready, perform it.

