

## Birdsong: Teachers' notes and tips – elementary

### 1 Pre-reading tasks

- a A great way to start the lesson is to play some birdsong! The BBC has a great website with songs on, either play a few and ask students to say which one they like the best or, if these birds are common where you teach, see if students can identify the blackbird, for example.

**Tip: use sounds to bring the topic alive**

This is the link: [www.bbc.co.uk/nature/programmes/radio/dawn\\_chorus/dawn\\_gallery.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/programmes/radio/dawn_chorus/dawn_gallery.shtml)

- b Then give each pair a copy of the first page of the worksheet. They need to identify the birds by solving the anagrams.
- c Feedback: *sparrow, blackbird, pigeon, thrush* and *robin*.
- d Ask students which birds are common where they live. Are they songbirds?

**Tip: do some background work on birds in the country you teach in**

Does the country have a national bird? Is it endangered? Is there a bird that is often used to represent the country, e.g. the kiwi in New Zealand? Do any birds appear in local folklore? The more you can link the topic to the students' lives, the more interested they'll be.

**Tip: plan ahead**

If you know that you'll do this lesson in the future then give the above questions to the students for homework, they can tell you and each other what they have found out or know.

- e Now ask students, in pairs, to decide which of the statements in part two are true. It doesn't matter if they don't know; encourage students to guess the answers.
- f Also encourage pairs to compare their ideas, do they agree?

### 2 First reading tasks

- a Either write on the board or dictate the following: *The robin, Bird watching, Why birds sing*.
- b Give each student a copy of the text and ask them to read it fairly quickly (no underlining or following the words with a pen, and certainly no dictionaries!) and decide which of the three is the best title.
- c After students have compared their ideas see what they think. *Why birds sing* is the best title.

**Tip: students should read and get the gist first**

If students do the next task first, they will only be looking for that specific information without understanding the whole text. This makes reading more difficult and therefore less fun.

### 3 Second reading tasks

- a Now students read again and check their answers from the worksheet.
- b Students compare their answers with each other. Monitor well and check that they're correct.

**Tip: consider not giving feedback**

If you have been monitoring there's no need for open class feedback, except to say that the pigeon is not a songbird as this answer is not in the text.

### 3 Third reading tasks

- a Although this task looks similar there is a difference – none of the answers are clear from the text. Students have to work out if they are true or not, or if the information is even in the text.

**Tip: do an example first**

Elicit this from the students: there's no evidence that she's happy and she does say it's cold. She also hopes she doesn't have to wait long, so this is false.

- b As the example shows, the students have to look for clues as the answer isn't obvious in the text.
- c Students continue working on their own. Once they've finished they can compare their ideas with another student.
- d Feedback: elicit answers from the students **b not given c not given d true e true f false, it's voluntary work rather than a job g true h not really, it's the artificial light that makes him sing.**

**Tip: encourage inferring**

Students should be encouraged to read more into a text rather than just understand the basic facts. A task like this helps elementary students to develop their skills of inference.

### 4 Post-reading tasks – a project

- a Tell students that for homework they have to choose a bird and find out more about it. It can be any kind of bird – a seabird, a bird of prey, a rare bird, and from any country.
- b Give each student a copy of the second page of the worksheet. Go through the questions so that they understand how to answer. *When can you see the bird?* means all year round, or just a few months in the summer? *Who makes the nest?* means the male, the female or both? The information can be found from the Internet, or from reference books. If you teach in the UK the RSPB site is also good: [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)
- c The next class students bring in their answered questions and tell each other about their birds.

**Tip: adapt the task to suit your students**

Younger students may want to make a colourful poster that includes migration paths – let them use their imagination!