

Birdsong: Teachers' notes and tips – upper intermediate

1 Pre-reading tasks

- a Play the following 'song' and ask students to tell you a) what they can hear and b) when this can be heard.

Tip: download the 'song' before the class and play it loud!

Here is the link: www.idcd.info/ (MP3 format: UK dawn chorus May 2006)

- b Feedback: a) it's birds singing b) it's the dawn chorus, so therefore very early in the morning.
- c Give each pair a copy of the worksheet and ask them to do part 1. This is just speaking, encourage them to say more if they can.
- d Listen out for a student who is quite keen on birds and ask them to tell the class why they like them and if they go bird-watching, etc.

Tip: link the topic to the students' lives

Even if only one student is interested in birds that will help to create an interest in the others. Can anyone name the bird in the picture? (It's a thrush.)

- e Ask students to read the three options in part 2.

2 First reading tasks

- a Give each student a copy of the text, ask them to read it quickly and choose the best option.
- b Students compare their answers with each other.
- c Feedback: She became interested in birds and wants to help them.

Tip: provide appropriate first reading tasks

Set tasks that require students to think about the overall meaning rather than looking for specific information. The task should make students read all the text and help them with the gist.

3 Second reading tasks

- a Explain that part 3 of the worksheet is a table that includes sentences which summarize the content of the text. They need to read the text again more slowly and match up the columns.
- b Highlight the given example, then get students to carry on individually.
- c When they've finished they compare their answers with another student, checking that they have the same answers.

Tip: vary feedback

If you have an IWB in your classroom you can project the table and get students to come up and draw the arrows.

Tip: provide alternative comprehension questions

The task both tests and aids comprehension but is a change from the typical comprehension question format.

4 Third reading tasks

- a Notice that there is an additional task to the column matching. Students also have to order the sentences. Again highlight to students that the Jim sentence with the arrows also appears first in the text.
- b Students then read to order the sentences.
- c Feedback: get students to take it in turns to read out the sentences in the correct order. The answers are at the end of these notes.

Tip: do the task yourself

Although the answers are given, do the task yourself - it helps you to notice any problems your students may have.

4 Post-reading tasks – vocabulary

- a Part 4 on the worksheet: as students have read the text a few times now they should be able to find these words fairly quickly.
- b Feedback: **a** *pitch black* **b** *twitcher* (this is a colloquial term) **c** *our feathered friends* (coll) **d** *at an unearthly hour* **e** *shivering* **f** *avian* (e.g. avian flu) **g** *cunning* **h** *to mimic* **i** *a repertoire* **j** *to trigger* **k** *to make a mental note*

Tip: encourage students to work out the meaning of unknown words from context

Tasks like these help students not to be too dependent on dictionaries.

Tip: consider other follow on activities

Are your students interested in the environment and the effect it has on wildlife? If so perhaps suggest they research a couple of other examples where a creature has adapted itself to survive in a changing world. They can share this information in another lesson.

A	Who	B	What they did	C	The reason why
	Jim		made his friend get up early		to listen to the dawn chorus.
	Jim		was confident about his friend's reaction		because the dawn chorus is incredible.
	The male birds		sing		to defend their territory and find a mate.
	The male birds		sing complicated songs		to impress the females.
	The females		chooses the best singer		as he will be fit and strong.
	The dawn chorus		finishes not long after sunrise		because the birds can now look for food.
	The blue tit		has adapted its song		to survive in a noisy city.
	The sparrow		has reduced in numbers		because the cities are too noisy and light.
	The robin		is the first to start singing		because he is the most sensitive to light.
	Jim's friend		decides to feed the birds		to help them survive.