

Bamboo: Teachers' notes and tips – elementary

1 Pre-reading tasks: activating schemata

- a Tell the students they're going to read about a man and his garden. Make a mindmap on the board: write the word *Garden* and ask students what can be found in a garden (plants, flowers, trees...). Then ask for others words that go with these (leaves, flowers, fruit...), some adjectives (green, tall, colourful...) and a job (gardener...).
- b Then elicit the names of plants/trees they know and add these to the mindmap.

Tip: use a mindmap to identify lexical sets

As a native reader we know what kinds of words to expect if we read about a garden. Students need to be as prepared.

- c Then ask students to tell their partners which is their favourite plant/tree, and why.

Tip: create interest in the topic and do an example first

Choose a plant/tree (indoor or outdoor) and say why you like it so much. It would be a good idea to have some pictures of it especially if it's not grown locally. Can it be used for anything?

2 Reading tasks: reading for gist

- a Hold up a copy of the text far enough away so students cannot read it. Ask how many paragraphs there are. (7)
- b Give each pair a copy of the reading and a task sheet. Ask them to quickly read the first paragraph only and decide, together, what the **main idea** is. *I am in a garden. It is Robert's garden.* Feedback – are they able to see the information in the other options is less important?
- c The students continue with the other paragraphs but try and get them to do this as quickly as possible. (Time limit?) They do paragraph 7 themselves (example: *Everything is made from bamboo*).
- d Now ask students, without looking at the text again, to summarise the whole story. Open class.

Tip: build up the students' confidence – in themselves and the activities

Students need to be encouraged to read quickly for gist but without feeling pressured or panicky. Knowing they won't be tested on the quick reading, and that they will read the text again more slowly helps.

3 Reading tasks: reading for further comprehension

- a Now make sure each student has a copy of the text and task sheet. Ask them to work individually to think about the answers (no writing) and then compare their thoughts with their partner. Only speaking.
- b Open class feedback of their ideas.

Tip: encourage students to find the clues

The answers are not all obvious, Anna asks questions so perhaps a journalist? Did the students think bamboo was a tree? Bob walks in front of Anna on the bridge...

4 Post-reading: to encourage noticing

- a There are a number of phrasal verbs with 'walk' Did the students notice them? Ask them to try and guess or remember the missing words. No looking at the text while they do this!
- b When they have finished they can check their answers in the text.

Tip: don't isolate phrasal verbs into a lesson of their own

Students complain how difficult phrasal verbs are but can often read and understand them. Encouraging students to notice them while reading can help students to use them productively.

5 Post-reading: vocabulary

- a Up until now if students have been asking for the meaning of words tell them this will come later. Prevent dictionaries being used. Now at this stage the text has been read a number of times – are there still words that are unclear? Ask the students to write the word(s) down and to ask another student first if they can help. Only then should they look the words up.

Tip: develop students' strategies for dealing with unknown words

Students need to have the confidence to pass by unknown words knowing that the meaning may become clear later on, or it's unnecessary, or they can find it out later.

6 Post-reading: speaking

- a Weaker students can just read and speak. Stronger students can try and remember some of the conversation and do it without looking. More outgoing students could be asked to act out the scene, perhaps improvising.
- B Don't forget to ask students if they agree that bamboo is the most important plant in the world. If they disagree – which plant is more useful?

Tip: link the reading to a speaking activity

'Acting' scenes like this provides students at elementary level an opportunity to have a longish conversation. The dialogue is fairly natural and it can be fun.

Tip: link the reading to a writing activity

Why not use the information about bamboo as a warmer for the following lesson – write on the board *Bamboo is...* and *Bamboo can...* and ask students to make sentences about the plant.