

Bamboo: Teachers' notes and tips – upper-intermediate

1 Pre-reading tasks

- a Dictate the following sentence to your students:
There are few plants on this earth that will house you, seat you, serenade you at dinner and even be your dinner.
- b Ask a student to write it on the board and then for the class together to discuss which plant this could be. Elicit / give: bamboo.

Tip: step back from correcting

Don't be tempted to say anything when the student has finished the sentence. The other students will want to correct any errors. Can they guess the meaning of 'serenade'?

- c Explain to students that they are going to read about a man who thinks that bamboo is the most important plant in the world. Before reading they need to think of all the things bamboo can be used for, and things that are made of bamboo. Put them in small groups to do this. Refer to quote for inspiration.
- d The team with the most reads out their list and then others add anything not mentioned – how many things in total can the class come up with?
- e Next hand out the quiz and ask students in pairs to answer the questions.
- f When most have finished tell them to put the quiz away for the moment.

Tip: use quizzes to create interest in a topic

It's often very easy for a teacher to read an information-giving text and then design a short quiz as a pre-reading task. Students are then much more interested in reading.

Tip: think about pre-teaching vocabulary

Where possible, students should be encouraged to work out the meanings of words from context. In this text I think my students need to know the meaning of 'scaffolding', 'stilt house' and 'fodder' before reading. I'm going to draw the first two and give a definition for the third.

2 Reading tasks

- a The first reading should be done as quickly as possible, and without the students looking at their quiz answers. Tell them to read and underline all the examples mentioned that bamboo is used for. There are about 20. Had the students suggested any of the things in their lists?
- b Then students read more slowly and check the answers to their quiz – who got the most right?
- c What was the most surprising thing they read in the text?

Tip: encourage students to react to a text

By getting students to say *Wow, I never knew that bamboo...* is a natural response and reflects what we do in real-life.

3 **Post-reading tasks**

- a Ask students to put the reading away for the moment. Tell them that Bob had asked 4 questions to the interviewer. In pairs they should try to remember the questions and write them down. The first pair to say they have done this are asked to write them on the board. Don't monitor or correct – let the other students do this again.
- b Can they remember how the questions were answered?! Open class.
- c Then write the following words in columns on the board. Ideally this should be prepared on an OHT beforehand to save time.

graceful	pandas	biologist
dwarf	continents	enormous
alarmed	swaying	Europe
flexible	prone	bomb
durable	ardent	vitamins
fodder	source	crunchy

- d Students in pairs are then asked to decide together whether or not they read these words in the text. If they think they did what was the context?
- e Go through their ideas open class and put a tick by the word if they think it was in the text, or a cross if not. Students read to check their answers.
- g Do the students agree that bamboo is the most important plant in the world? Discuss open class.

Tip: try this “Did I read this?” activity on other texts too

By encouraging students to look at the words like this consolidates new vocabulary and helps students to internalise the words. It also makes students aware of how much they notice when they read a text. Here all the words are mentioned except for the third column.

- h In pairs students are asked to choose another plant which they think is also useful. First they have to make a list of all the things the plant is used for, or things that are made from it.
- i When students are ready they can spend five minutes each presenting their case: *We think the coconut palm is the most important plant in the world because...* Finally, get them all to vote.

Tip: use the internet

If students have access to the web why not give them the project for homework, they can look up sites for their plants and bring the list to class. Pictures would be great too, or a poster?

Tip: help the students with their choice

Spend a little time before the class thinking about the type of plants grown locally: date / coconut palm, willow, vine, ebony, pine, rubber..?; and their uses: food, medicine, furniture, roofing, dugout canoes, ropes, baskets..?