Secondary English

TESS India

Supporting reading for understanding

Teacher Education
through School-based
Support in India
www.TESS-India.edu.in

Localised by : State Council of Educational Research and Training, Assam

The Open University

UKaid
from the British people

TESS-India (Teacher Education through School-based Support) aims to improve the classroom practices of elementary and secondary teachers in India through the provision of Open Educational Resources (OERs) to support teachers in developing student-centred, participatory approaches. The TESS-India OERs provide teachers with a companion to the school textbook. They offer activities for teachers to try out in their classrooms with their students, together with case studies showing how other teachers have taught the topic and linked resources to support teachers in developing their lesson plans and subject knowledge.

TESS-India OERs have been collaboratively written by Indian and international authors to address Indian curriculum and contexts and are available for online and print use (http://www.tess-india.edu.in/). The OERs are available in several versions, appropriate for each participating Indian state and users are invited to adapt and localise the OERs further to meet local needs and contexts.

TESS-India is led by The Open University UK and funded by the UK government.

Video resources

Some of the activities in this unit are accompanied by the following icon:  *. This indicates that you will find it helpful to view the TESS-India video resources for the specified pedagogic theme.*

The TESS-India video resources illustrate key pedagogic techniques in a range of classroom contexts in India. We hope they will inspire you to experiment with similar practices. They are intended to complement and enhance your experience of working through the text-based units, but are not integral to them should you be unable to access them.

TESS-India video resources may be viewed online or downloaded from the TESS-India website, http://www.tess-india.edu.in/). Alternatively, you may have access to these videos on a CD or memory card.

Version 2.0 SE04v1
Assam

What this unit is about

Many of my students in secondary school struggle to understand the English lessons in the textbook when we read them. The lessons are often long, and they have so many words that the students don't know. I usually have to translate everything. Are there other ways that I can help my students to read and understand the lessons in English?

Sometimes when students read in a language that they are learning, such as English, they focus on the words that they don't know, or the grammatical structures that they don't understand. This means that they don't focus on the overall meaning of what they are reading: the events of the story or the arguments of the writer, for example.

This unit is about helping your students to understand the meaning of what they are reading in English, particularly the lessons in their textbooks. It describes some techniques that you can use to help your students understand what they are reading in English. It shows you how to run some activities that students can do before, during, and after reading a text, that will help them focus on the meaning of what they are reading. At the end of the unit, you will find a lesson plan for teaching a lesson using all of these techniques.

What you can learn in this unit

- How to prepare students to read a lesson so that they can understand it better.
- How to help students understand a text while they read it.
- How to check understanding after reading.

1 Preparing students to read

Many teachers use translation when they are teaching a new text, as this can help students understand individual words. However, there are some disadvantages of using translations all the time:

- If you always use translation and explanation, then students do not listen to as much English as they could. The more your students hear English in the classroom, the better they will be able to understand and use it (see the unit *Using more English in your classroom*).
- There are often no direct translations of many words and phrases in most languages. If students learn English by using English, they will be more likely to think in English and experience and use the language more effectively.
- Translation and explanation don't help students to work out the meanings of their lessons for themselves (see the unit *Strategies for teaching vocabulary*). If every word is translated for them, they could have problems when they need to read in English outside the classroom or in future.

Pause for thought

Think about the last lesson that you taught your students and answer these questions.

- What kind of text was in the lesson? For example, was it a piece of prose, a story or a poem?
- Did you read the text aloud to the students?
- How well did your students understand the text?
- Did you translate it into the students' home language?
- Did you explain its meaning in the students' home language?

It is good for you to use other techniques (along with some translation and explanation) to help your students to understand what they read.

Students have to read many lessons in their textbooks. Many of these texts are difficult, with complex vocabulary and grammatical structures. Sometimes the topics or themes of the texts are difficult too, discussing events that happened a long time ago, or in places that students have never visited or even heard of.

Students will be better able to understand what they have to read and the language in the text if you prepare them to read. You can do this by teaching some of the words, phrases and grammatical structures from the text before the students start reading, or by discussing the topics or themes of the lesson in advance of reading the text.

Activity 1: Planning how to teach 'The Perfect Life', a seventeenth century poem

This is an activity for you to do; it is a planning activity.

Read this poem from a Class X textbook (*English: A Textbook for Class X*). It is called 'The Perfect Life' and was written by Ben Jonson.

> It is not growing like a tree
> In bulk doth make man better be;
> Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
> To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:
> A lily of a day
> Is fairer far in May,
> Although it fall and die that night—
> It was the plant and flower of light.
> In small proportions we just beauties see;
> And in short measures life may perfect be.

When you have read it, answer these questions. Discuss them with a colleague if you can:

- The language in this poem is quite difficult for Class X students. How would you prepare them for the language before they read the poem?
- The poem was written by an English poet in the seventeenth century. How could you prepare Indian students in the twenty-first century for the themes in the poem?

Now read some teachers' ideas about how to teach this poem, and compare them with your own. Add any ideas that you thought of into the empty speech bubble below.

I would write the title of the poem on the board, and ask students to guess what is in the poem.

I taught this poem to my students. Before they read it, I asked them to write a list of what would make a perfect life. We then discussed their ideas and I wrote the most common ones on the board.

I would write some of the most difficult words on the board, and ask students if they know what they mean. I'd teach any words that they didn't know so that the poem was easier to read.

I observed a class studying this poem. Before the students read the poem, the teacher showed them a picture of an oak tree and a lily, and they talked about the differences between them.

Your thoughts:

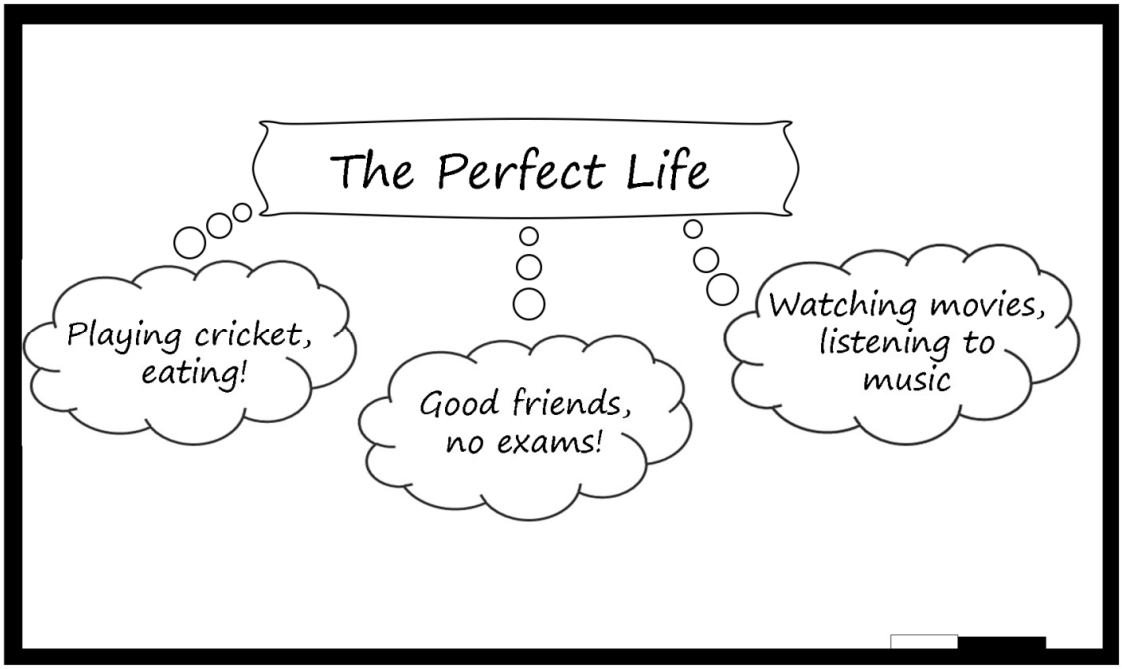
Activities where you prepare your students before they read something are often called pre-reading activities. They help students think about what the text will be about, which also helps them to understand the text better.

Case Study 1: Ms Gupta does a pre-reading activity with her class

Ms Gupta teaches English to Class X. She had to teach Ben Jonson's poem 'The Perfect Life' to her students. She knew that the text was difficult, and thought that her class would understand and remember the poem better if she prepared them before they read it.

Before teaching the poem, I wrote the title on the board: 'The Perfect Life'. I checked that my students could understand what this meant by asking them to translate the title into Hindi. Then I asked them: 'What makes a perfect life?'

Nobody suggested anything at first, so I gave them an example: 'The perfect life for me would be to do no cooking!' The students laughed, and one or two of them felt confident enough to make suggestions. This gave more students ideas, and I wrote five or six of them on the board.



Then I organised everyone into pairs. I did this by asking the students on every other bench to turn around, and to work with the person who was now opposite them. I told them:

> Write a list of the things that make a perfect life. Try to write in English if you can, as with the answers on the board. You have three minutes to write your lists.

While my students were writing, I walked around the classroom to make sure that they were doing the activity and to help anyone with vocabulary if they needed it.

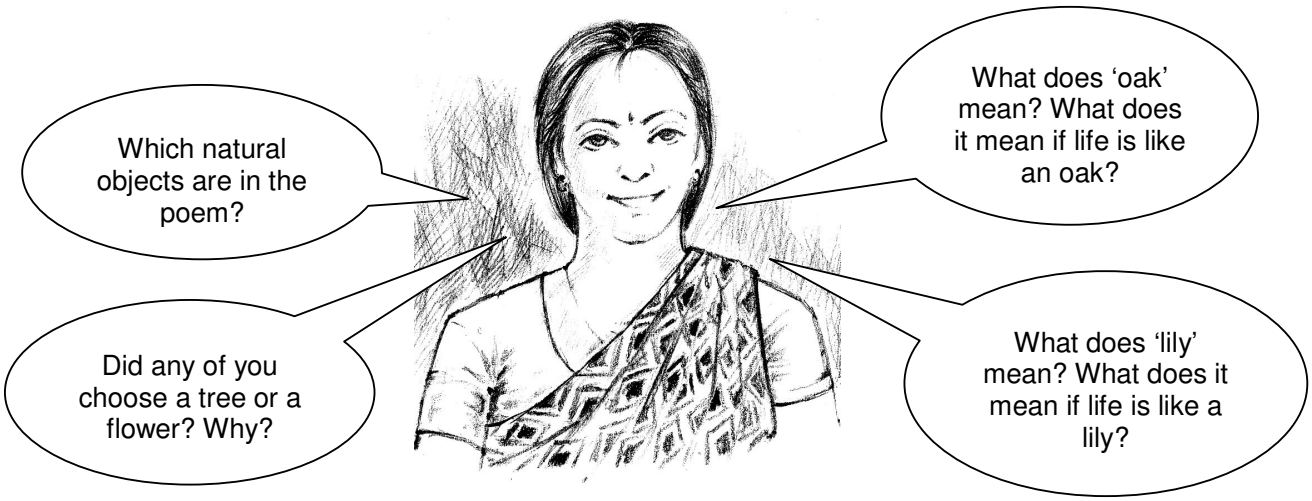
After a few minutes, I told everyone to stop writing and I wrote the following sentence on the board: 'The perfect life is like a …'.

I read out the sentence on the board, and asked students to finish the sentence using a natural object, and gave them an example: 'The perfect life is like a hotel.' This is because you don't have to cook when you stay at a hotel!

Then I asked them to give some ideas from the pair work, along with reasons for their suggestions. It was difficult for most of the students to give reasons in English, so I checked if other students could help them find the right words. If they still couldn't explain in English, I told them to use their home language. What was important for me was that the students were interested in the topic, and eager to read the poem.

After this, I told my class they were going to read a poem with the title 'The Perfect Life'. I told them that I was going to read the poem aloud, and that they should listen and follow in their textbooks. I explained that in the poem, the poet compares life to natural objects. I asked them to note what these natural objects were as they read and listened to the poem. I did this so that they would have a reason to read the text. I then read the poem aloud, without translating or explaining it.

Then I asked the class some questions:



This activity helped everyone to understand the poem. After this, it was easier to discuss the poem, and students remembered the poem better too.

Activity 2: Try in the classroom – preparing students to read

It is always helpful to prepare students before they read a lesson or any other English text (You can prepare students for a listening activity in the same way – see the unit *Helping your students to listen to English*.) Follow the steps below:

1. Select a lesson that your students haven't read yet (perhaps the next one in the textbook). It can be any kind of passage – prose, poetry, a play or a newspaper or report.
2. Before the class, read the passage. Note down a pre-reading activity that you want your students to do before reading the text. Here are some examples of pre-reading activities:
   - write the title on the board and ask the students to guess what the text is about
   - ask them to discuss the main topic (for example, if the topic is about household chores, you could ask them to discuss who does what around the house)
   - teach some of the difficult words and phrases from the text
   - write some of the words and phrases from the text on the board and ask the students to use them in sentences.

3. In class, do the activity with your students. If students use their home language, help them find the important words and phrases that they need in English. This will still help them to understand the lesson or passage better.

Pause for thought

Here are some questions for you to think about after trying this activity. If possible, discuss these questions with a colleague.

- How long did it take to do the pre-reading activity in class?
- Did your students seem to be interested in the activity? Were there some students who were not interested? Why do you think this?
- Did this pre-reading activity help them to understand the text?

You may think that pre-reading activities take up too much time, and that it is quicker to just start the lesson. But these kinds of activities do not need to take up much time – even five or ten minutes can be helpful to prepare students to read.

Hopefully these activities will raise your students' interests and help them to understand the lessons better. Note which students seem to understand and which don't, so that you can further support those who are still struggling to understand. Try different activities before students read and see which ones are more effective.

2 Helping students to understand a text while they read it

Giving students a pre-reading activity helps them prepare for what they are going to read. Giving students time to read silently on their own (Figure 1) may also help them to understand – and enjoy – their reading. In the following, you will look at activities that you can give your students while they are reading silently to help them understand what they are reading.

Figure 1 A female student reading silently.

In order to help your students understand what they read while they are reading silently, it is important to give them some focus for their reading. Looking for answers to questions, for example, gives your students a purpose for reading a text and helps them to focus on the meaning of what they are reading.

Giving your students questions to answer while reading will also help you to assess how much the students understand. Students will read at different speeds, and will understand different things. Walk around the classroom as your students read. Note which students are having problems answering questions and which students find the activity easy.

Video: Monitoring and giving feedback

Activity 3: Try in the classroom – using silent reading to help your students to understand a text while they read it

Follow these steps to try silent reading in your classroom:

1. Select a text that your students haven't read yet (perhaps the next one in the textbook). It can be any kind of text – prose, poetry, a play or a newspaper or report. It could be the same text that you used in Activity 1.
2. Before class, read the text. Think of four or five questions that you can ask about it. If it is a long text, think of questions you can ask about one section of it. Make sure that the questions are about the meaning of the text and what happens in it (for example, 'What advice does the writer give?'), and not about the language used in it (for example, 'What does "doth" mean?'). See Resource 1 for an example of a text (a letter) and some questions you could ask about its meaning. You can learn more about asking questions in the unit *Whole-class reading routines*.
3. In class, give students your questions about the text. You could write these questions on the board, or dictate them. Do this *before* students read the text.
4. Tell students to read the lesson or text. If it is more than two or three paragraphs, ask them to read just one part of it. Ask students to read silently and find the answers to the questions. Tell them it's not important that they understand every word. Give them a time limit. As students read, walk around the room to check that everyone is reading and to deal with any problems or questions.
5. When the time limit is up, ask students to answer the questions. You could elicit responses from the whole class, or they could work in pairs to compare their answers. They can use their home language if they are having trouble saying what they want to in English. Try to help them – or have them help each other – if they are struggling to express themselves. Resist the temptation to answer the questions yourself. Be patient and allow the students to answer.
6. Ask your students what else they learned from the text or found interesting in it, and ask them to give reasons why.
7. After this activity, or in a following class, you could move on to look at the text and the language used in it in more detail if you feel like students haven't understood it well.

Pause for thought

Here are some questions for you to think about after trying this activity. If possible, discuss these questions with a colleague.

- Did giving students a time limit when doing a silent reading activity help to focus their reading?
- How much do you think that your students understood without you translating or explaining?

Time limits are important because some students will read faster than others, and some will understand more than others. Nonetheless, all students will have been able to read at least some of the lesson in the time you set, and will have some understanding of the content. If some students finish before others, they can read the lesson or a section of the lesson again.

When they read silently, your students will not understand every word. They don't need to, and this is quite normal the first time they read something. What is important is that they understand the most important information, or the message of the text. The questions that you ask them should help them to find that message. With practice, students will become better at reading on their own.

For most people, it is easier to enjoy and understand a text when reading silently. In the English classroom, however, students are often asked to read texts aloud – or teachers read texts aloud to their students. Reading aloud can be a useful technique. However, doing it all the time can hinder students' progress in learning to read independently.

3 Checking understanding of a lesson after reading it

Once students have read a text, they will probably have some understanding of the most important things that have happened, or the most important things that the writer is saying. They will also have some understanding of the vocabulary and language. After reading the text, you should check how much students have understood.

Activities that you could use to check students' understanding of a text include the following:

- **Comprehension questions:** You may find these in the textbook, or you can create your own. Write them on the board or dictate them to your students. An alternative is to ask students to write their own comprehension question in groups after reading a lesson. Groups exchange questions and answer each other's (see the unit *Whole-class reading routines*).
- **Discussions and summaries:** Students discuss in groups what they have understood about the text. They could write a summary of what happened, or the most important points in the text.
- **Grammar and vocabulary development:** Lessons in textbooks have examples of vocabulary and grammatical structures that your students can learn about and use (see the unit *English grammar in action*). After reading a lesson, do activities in which your students use some of these words or structures. For example, ask them to write some sentences or a paragraph using some of the new vocabulary for the lesson.

Activities in which you check how much students have understood about a text, or encourage them to use language from a passage, are called post-reading activities. They help you and your students to see how much they have understood, and they help students to use new language.

Activity 4: Planning and carrying out a post-reading activity

Think about a lesson using a text you are going to teach next week. Look at the ideas for post-reading activities and decide which you will use with your class. For more information on planning lessons, see Resource 2.

Plan and carry out the lesson using the post-reading activity. As students do post-reading activities, walk around the room to check what they have understood, and use this as part of your assessment of students' progress in reading.

Did this activity help you to assess the students' understanding? How will you use your assessments in planning your next lesson? For more information on assessment, see Resource 3.

Video: Planning lessons

Video: Assessing progress and performance

4 Combining techniques

Now read Case Study 2.

Case Study 2: Mrs Gupta runs a brainstorming session on Nehru's letter to India

Ms Gupta used the techniques from this unit to teach a passage with Class IX. She prepared the class with a pre-reading activity and then did some activities after the students had finished reading to practise language relating to the theme of the passage.

Last week, I was teaching Nehru's 'A letter to the children of India' with Class IX [see Resource 1]. Before my students read the text, I wrote the title on the board, and explained what the letter was about. I told them that it was written by an old man who was giving some advice to the younger generation.

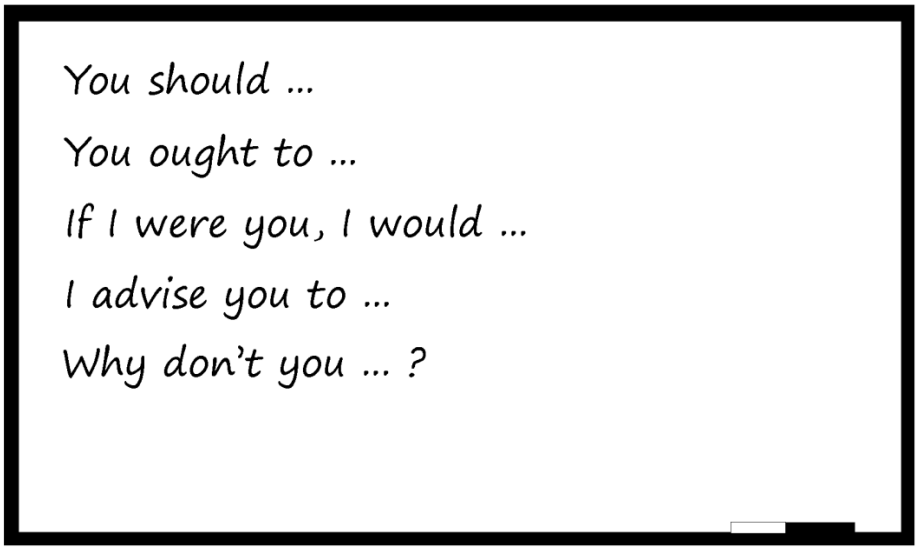
I asked my students to think of some advice that they would give to the children of India. A couple of students made some suggestions, such as 'You should visit Delhi!' and 'You should learn about technology!' I then told them to work in pairs, and to write down five pieces of advice that they would give. I told them to write the sentences in English. I wasn't worried about students making mistakes as they wrote. I just wanted them to get some ideas. After three minutes, I ended the activity, and asked three or four pairs to read out some examples of what they had written.

Then I told the class to read Nehru's letter silently. I told them to underline the advice that he gave in his letter as they read. I also gave them a time limit of ten minutes to read and find the advice. As they read, I walked around the room to make sure that everyone understood what they needed to do. I noticed that

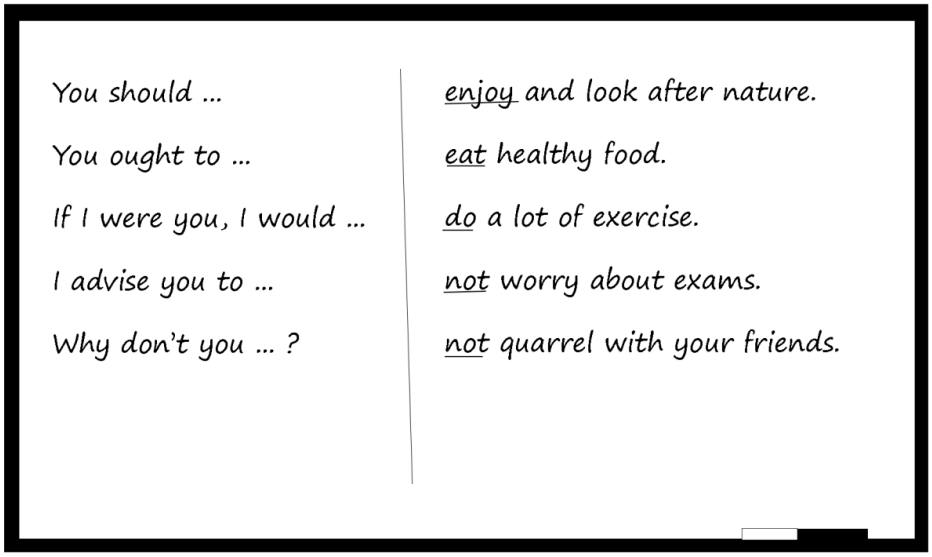
Anuradha was not underlining anything in the letter. She had not understood that she needed to find advice, so I explained and helped her to find something. Then she was able to do it on her own.

When the time was up, I asked my students to compare the advice that they had found with the classmate sitting next to them. I also told them to discuss how it was similar to or different from the advice that they had written before they read the letter. As they compared their ideas, I walked around the room and listened to the conversations. It was clear that some students had understood the advice in the letter, while some students were struggling. After a few minutes, I asked the class to stop talking. We then discussed the advice in the letter as a whole class, and I explained any words that were preventing students from understanding the advice given.

After this, I wrote some phrases that we might use when we give advice in English on the board:



I asked my students to imagine that they were an old grandfather and grandmother like Nehru, talking to their grandchildren. Some of them thought this was quite funny, and they liked the idea! I asked them to think of some advice that they might give to their grandchildren. I gave them an example: 'You should work hard.' A couple of students gave some more ideas and I added them to the board like this:



I pointed out that students could use any beginning (on the left-hand side of the board) with any ending (on the right-hand side of the board). I underlined the verbs ('enjoy', 'eat', 'do', 'be', 'avoid') and explained that they should use the infinitive form of the verbs after these phrases. Then I read the sentences aloud, and asked the students to repeat them in order to practise their pronunciation.

Next, I organised students into pairs, telling them that one of them was the grandparent, and the other was the grandchild. I explained that the grandparent should give advice to the grandchild. When they were ready, I gave them two or three minutes to act out the roles, and then they exchanged roles. As I listened, I noticed that some pairs were using the advice written on the board, while more confident speakers were coming up with new phrases.

Finally, as an assignment, I asked students to write their own letter titled 'A letter to the children of India'. I told them to use some of the phrases that they had just practised, and to imagine that the letter would be published in the *The Assam Tribune*. Next class, I had some very interesting letters to read!

Activity 5: Try in the classroom – a letter to the children of India

In Case Study 2, the students do several activities before, during and after reading Nehru's letter. These activities include practice in listening, speaking, reading and writing. You can find the teacher's lesson plan in Resource 4. Try using this lesson plan to teach this lesson (or a similar lesson) to your students.

Pause for thought

Here are some questions for you to think about after trying this activity. If possible, discuss these questions with a colleague.

- Do you think the techniques from this unit helped your students to understand the text?
- Did your students use the language of giving advice effectively?

You do not need to use all of the techniques each time you teach a lesson. However, it is good to use as many as you can as often as you can. You can use these techniques with any lesson in the textbook, or any other text (e.g. an article in a newspaper). Write a similar plan with another lesson or text, and share it with your colleagues.

5 Summary

To help students read for understanding, you can give them pre-reading activities. You can also encourage students to read silently, and give them something to do while they read (such as looking for answers to questions). You can give them post-reading activities in order to check understanding, practise new language from the lesson or develop their language skills such as speaking or writing. A combination of these techniques can be used with any text, from the textbook or from elsewhere.

If you would like to learn more about developing your own reading skills, see Resource 5, and if you would like to learn more about teaching reading, see the additional resources section.

Other Secondary English teacher development units on this topic are:

- *Whole-class reading routines*: You can learn more about reading in this unit. It discusses more techniques and strategies that students can use to develop their reading skills.
- *Strategies for teaching vocabulary*: This unit discusses how teachers can help students to cope with words in a text, and discusses using texts to teach words in context.
- *Promoting reading for pleasure*: You can learn about techniques for helping students to read extensively in this unit.

Resources

Resource 1: A letter to the children of India

Dear Children,

I like being with children and talking to them and, even more, playing with them. For the moment I forget that I am terribly old and it is very long ago since I was a child. But when I sit down to write, I cannot forget my age and the distance that separates you from me. Old people have a habit of delivering sermons and good advice to the young.

I remember that I disliked this very much long ago when I was a boy. So I suppose you do not like it very much either. Grown-ups also have a habit of appearing to be very wise, even though very few of them possess much wisdom. I have not yet quite made up my mind whether I am wise or not. Sometimes listening to others I feel that I must be wise and brilliant and important. Then, looking at myself, I begin to doubt this. In any event, people who are wise do not talk about their wisdom and do not behave as if they were very superior persons …

What then shall I write about? If you were with me, I would love to talk to you about this beautiful world of ours, about flowers, trees, birds, animals, stars, mountains, glaciers and all the other beautiful things that surround us in the world. We have all this beauty all around us and yet we, who are grown-ups, often forget about it and lose ourselves in our arguments or in our quarrels. We sit in our offices and imagine that we are doing very important work.

I hope you will be more sensible and open your eyes and ears to this beauty and life that surrounds you. Can you recognise the flowers by their names and the birds by their singing? How easy it is to make friends with them and with everything in nature, if you go to them affectionately and with friendship. You must have read many fairy tales and stories of long ago. But the world itself is the greatest fairy tale and story of adventure that was ever written. Only we must have eyes to see and ears to hear and a mind that opens out to the life and beauty of the world.

Grown-ups have a strange way of putting themselves in compartments and groups. They build barriers … of religion, caste, colour, party, nation, province, language, customs, and of rich and poor. Thus they live in prisons of their own making. Fortunately, children do not know much about these barriers, which separate. They play and work with each other and it is only when they grow up that they begin to learn about these barriers from their elders. I hope you will take a long time in growing up …

Some months ago, the children of Japan wrote to me and asked me to send them an elephant. I sent them a beautiful elephant on behalf of the children of India. … This noble animal became a symbol of India to them and a link between them and the children of India. I was very happy that this gift of ours gave so much joy to so many children of Japan, and made them think of our

> country … remember that everywhere there are children like you going to school and work and play, and sometimes quarrelling but always making friends again. You can read about these countries in your books, and when you grow up many of you will visit them. Go there as friends and you will find friends to greet you.
>
> You know we had a very great man amongst us. He was called Mahatma Gandhi. But we used to call him affectionately Bapuji. He was wise, but he did not show off his wisdom. He was simple and childlike in many ways and he loved children … he taught us to face the world cheerfully and with laughter.
>
> Our country is a very big country and there is a great deal to be done by all of us. If each one of us does his or her little bit, then all this mounts up and the country prospers and goes ahead fast.
>
> I have tried to talk to you in this letter as if you were sitting near me, and I have written more than I intended.
>
> (Nehru, 1949)

Some questions you could ask about the letter:

- Who is the writer of the letter? Who is he writing to?
- How old is the writer of the letter?
- What is the main purpose of the letter?
- How does the writer describe grown-ups?
- How are children different to grown-ups?
- What advice does the writer give?

Resource 2: Planning lessons

Why planning and preparing are important

Good lessons have to be planned. Planning helps to make your lessons clear and well-timed, meaning that students can be active and interested. Effective planning also includes some in-built flexibility so that teachers can respond to what they find out about their students' learning as they teach. Working on a plan for a series of lessons involves knowing the students and their prior learning, what it means to progress through the curriculum, and finding the best resources and activities to help students learn.

Planning is a continual process to help you prepare both individual lessons as well as series of lessons, each one building on the last. The stages of lesson planning are:

- being clear about what your students need in order to make progress
- deciding how you are going to teach in a way that students will understand and how to maintain flexibility to respond to what you find
- looking back on how well the lesson went and what your students have learnt in order to plan for the future.

Planning a series of lessons

When you are following a curriculum, the first part of planning is working out how best to break up subjects and topics in the curriculum into sections or chunks. You need to consider the time available as well as ways for students to make progress and build up skills and knowledge gradually. Your experience or discussions with colleagues may tell you that one topic will take up four lessons, but another topic will only take two.

You may be aware that you will want to return to that learning in different ways and at different times in future lessons, when other topics are covered or the subject is extended.

In all lesson plans you will need to be clear about:

- what you want the students to learn
- how you will introduce that learning
- what students will have to do and why.

You will want to make learning active and interesting so that students feel comfortable and curious. Consider what the students will be asked to do across the series of lessons so that you build in variety and interest, but also flexibility. Plan how you can check your students' understanding as they progress through the series of lessons. Be prepared to be flexible if some areas take longer or are grasped quickly.

Preparing individual lessons

After you have planned the series of lessons, each individual lesson will have to be planned **based on the progress that students have made up to that point**. You know what the students should have learnt or should be able to do at the end of the series of lessons, but you may have needed to re-cap something unexpected or move on more quickly. Therefore each individual lesson must be planned so that all your students make progress and feel successful and included.

Within the lesson plan you should make sure that there is enough time for each of the activities and that any resources are ready, such as those for practical work or active groupwork. As part of planning materials for large classes you may need to plan different questions and activities for different groups.

When you are teaching new topics, you may need to make time to practise and talk through the ideas with other teachers so that you are confident.

Think of preparing your lessons in three parts. These parts are discussed below.

1 The introduction

At the start of a lesson, explain to the students what they will learn and do, so that everyone knows what is expected of them. Get the students interested in what they are about to learn by allowing them to share what they know already.

2 The main part of the lesson

Outline the content based on what students already know. You may decide to use local resources, new information or active methods including groupwork or problem solving. Identify the resources to use and the way that you will make use of your classroom space. Using a variety of activities, resources, and timings is an important part of lesson planning. If you use various methods and activities, you will reach more students, because they will learn in different ways.

3 The end of the lesson to check on learning

Always allow time (either during or at the end of the lesson) to find out how much progress has been made. Checking does not always mean a test. Usually it will be quick and on the spot – such as planned questions or observing students presenting what they have learnt – but you must plan to be flexible and to make changes according to what you find out from the students' responses.

A good way to end the lesson can be to return to the goals at the start and allowing time for the students to tell each other and you about their progress with that learning. Listening to the students will make sure you know what to plan for the next lesson.

Reviewing lessons

Look back over each lesson and keep a record of what you did, what your students learnt, what resources were used and how well it went so that you can make improvements or adjustments to your plans for subsequent lessons. For example, you may decide to:

- change or vary the activities
- prepare a range of open and closed questions
- have a follow-up session with students who need extra support.

Think about what you could have planned or done even better to help students learn.

Your lesson plans will inevitably change as you go through each lesson, because you cannot predict everything that will happen. Good planning will mean that you know what learning you want to happen and therefore you will be ready to respond flexibly to what you find out about your students' actual learning.

Resource 3: Assessing progress and performance

Assessing students' learning has two purposes:

- **Summative assessment** looks back and makes a judgement on what has already been learnt. It is often conducted in the form of tests that are graded, telling students their attainment on the questions in that test. This also helps in reporting outcomes.
- **Formative assessment** (or assessment for learning) is quite different, being more informal and diagnostic in nature. Teachers use it as part of the learning process, for example questioning to check whether students have understood something. The outcomes of this assessment are then used to change the next learning experience. Monitoring and feedback are part of formative assessment.

Formative assessment enhances learning because in order to learn, most students must:

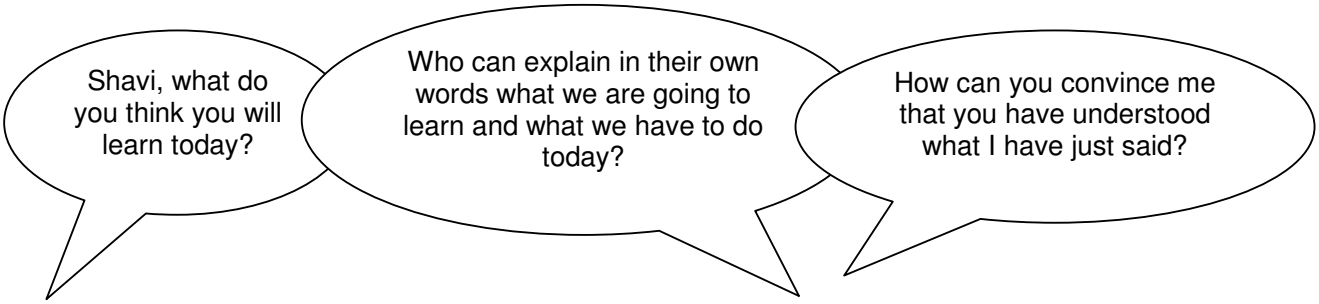
- understand what they are expected to learn
- know where they are now with that learning
- understand how they can make progress (that is, what to study and how to study)
- know when they have reached the goals and expected outcomes.

As a teacher, you will get the best out of your students if you attend to the four points above in every lesson. Thus assessment can be undertaken before, during and after instruction:

- **Before:** Assessing before the teaching begins can help you identify what the students know and can do prior to instruction. It determines the baseline and gives you a starting point for planning your teaching. Enhancing your understanding of what your students know reduces the chance of re-teaching the students something they have already mastered or omitting something they possibly should (but do not yet) know or understand.
- **During:** Assessing during classroom teaching involves checking if students are learning and improving. This will help you make adjustments in your teaching methodology, resources and activities. It will help you understand how the student is progressing towards the desired objective and how successful your teaching is.
- **After:** Assessment that occurs after teaching confirms what students have learnt and shows you who has learnt and who still needs support. This will allow you to assess the effectiveness of your teaching goal.

Before: being clear about what your students will learn

When you decide what the students must learn in a lesson or series of lessons, you need to share this with them. Carefully distinguish what the students are expected to learn from what you are asking them to do. Ask an open question that gives you the chance to assess whether they have really understood. For example:



Give the students a few seconds to think before they answer, or perhaps ask the students to first discuss their answers in pairs or small groups. When they tell you their answer, you will know whether they understand what it is they have to learn.

Before: knowing where students are in their learning

In order to help your students improve, both you and they need to know the current state of their knowledge and understanding. Once you have shared the intended learning outcomes or goals, you could do the following:

- Ask the students to work in pairs to make a mind map or list of what they already know about that topic, giving them enough time to complete it but not too long for those with few ideas. You should then review the mind maps or lists.
- Write the important vocabulary on the board and ask for volunteers to say what they know about each word. Then ask the rest of the class to put their thumbs up if they understand the word, thumbs down if they know very little or nothing, and thumbs horizontal if they know something.

Knowing where to start will mean that you can plan lessons that are relevant and constructive for your students. It is also important that your students are able to assess how well they are learning so that both you and they know what they need to learn next. Providing opportunities for your students to take charge of their own learning will help to make them life-long learners.

During: ensuring students' progress in learning

When you talk to students about their current progress, make sure that they find your feedback both useful and constructive. Do this by:

- helping students know their strengths and how they might further improve
- being clear about what needs further development
- being positive about how they might develop their learning, checking that they understand and feel able to use the advice.

You will also need to provide opportunities for students to improve their learning. This means that you may have to modify your lesson plans to close the gap between where your students are now in their learning and where you wish them to be. In order to do this you might have to:

- go back over some work that you thought they knew already

- group students according to needs, giving them differentiated tasks
- encourage students to decide for themselves which of several resources they need to study so that they can 'fill their own gap'
- use 'low entry, high ceiling' tasks so that all students can make progress – these are designed so that all students can start the task but the more able ones are not restricted and can progress to extend their learning.

By slowing the pace of lessons down, very often you can actually speed up learning because you give students the time and confidence to think and understand what they need to do to improve. By letting students talk about their work among themselves, and reflect on where the gaps are and how they might close them, you are providing them with ways to assess themselves.

After: collecting and interpreting evidence, and planning ahead

While teaching–learning is taking place and after setting a classwork or homework task, it is important to:

- find out how well your students are doing
- use this to inform your planning for the next lesson
- feed it back to students.

The four key states of assessment are discussed below.

Collecting information or evidence

Every student learns differently, at their own pace and style, both inside and outside the school. Therefore, you need to do two things while assessing students:

- Collect information from a variety of sources – from your own experience, the student, other students, other teachers, parents and community members.
- Assess students individually, in pairs and in groups, and promote self-assessment. Using different methods is important, as no single method can provide all the information you need. Different ways of collecting information about the students' learning and progress include observing, listening, discussing topics and themes, and reviewing written class and homework.

Recording

In all schools across India the most common form of recording is through the use of report card, but this may not allow you to record all aspects of a student's learning or behaviours. There are some simple ways of doing this that you may like to consider, such as:

- noting down what you observe while teaching–learning is going on in a diary/notebook/register
- keeping samples of students' work (written, art, craft, projects, poems, etc.) in a portfolio
- preparing every student's profile
- noting down any unusual incidents, changes, problems, strengths and learning evidences of students.

Interpreting the evidence

Once information and evidence have been collected and recorded, it is important to interpret it in order to form an understanding of how each student is learning and progressing. This requires careful reflection and analysis. You then need to act on your findings to improve learning, maybe through feedback to students or finding new resources, rearranging the groups, or repeating a learning point.

Planning for improvement

Assessment can help you to provide meaningful learning opportunities to every student by establishing specific and differentiated learning activities, giving attention to the students who need more help and challenging the students who are more advanced.

Resource 4: Lesson plan – a letter to the children of India

You can use the structure of this lesson plan with any text or passage. The different parts can be carried out in the same class, or over a series of classes.

Pre-reading

1. Write the title on the board, and explain what the letter is about (an old man giving advice to the children of India).
2. Ask the whole class to think of some advice that they would give to the children of India. Accept one or two suggestions and write them on the backboard in English.
3. Organise students into pairs. Tell each pair to discuss and write down five pieces of advice in English. Tell them not to worry about making mistakes.
4. After three minutes, tell the students to stop writing, and ask three or four pairs to read out some examples.

Tip: Remember that this stage is about getting ideas and preparing for the text. Don't focus on mistakes. Focus instead on the content; that is, the advice that your students are suggesting.

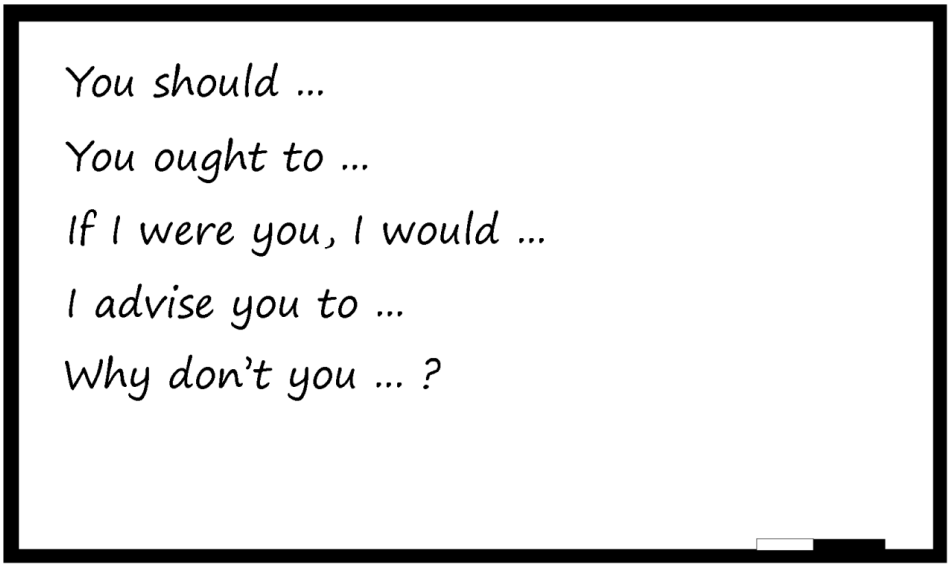
While reading

1. Tell students to read the letter silently. Tell them to underline the advice that Nehru gives as they read the letter. Give students a time limit to read the letter and find the advice.
2. When time is up, ask the students to compare the advice they found with a classmate (as a pair), or classmates (as a group). Tell them to discuss the similarities and differences between Nehru's advice and their own.
3. As students discuss the letter, walk around the room and note how well students have understood it. If students are having problems, help them.
4. After a few minutes, tell the students to stop talking and discuss the advice that Nehru gives with the whole class.

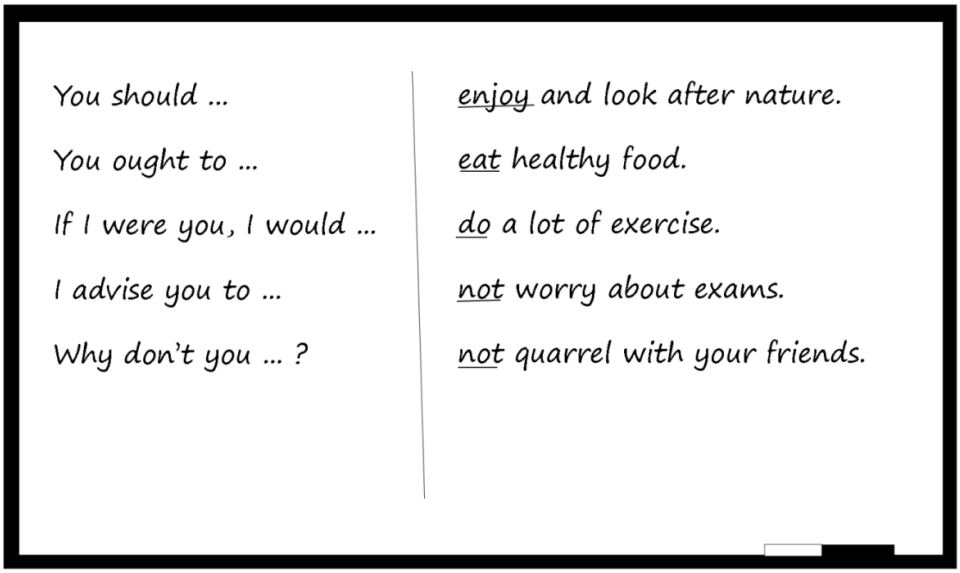
Tip: This is your opportunity to see how well your students have understood the letter. It is fine if they have not understood every word of the text, but you need to see that they have understood the most important points. Have most of your students been able to find the advice that Nehru gives? If not, what is preventing them from understanding? How can you help them? Some students will have understood more than others. Perhaps they can explain.

Post-reading

1. Write some phrases for giving advice in English on the board:



2. Tell your students to imagine that they are old grandmothers or grandfathers. Ask them to think of advice that they might give to their grandchildren. You can give an example: 'You should work hard.'
3. Write suggestions on the board, for example:



4. Point out that the students can use any beginning with any end. Point out the use of the infinitive. Read the sentences aloud and ask students to repeat for pronunciation.
5. Organise students into pairs, and give roles: one student is a grandparent; the other is a grandchild. The student playing the role of the grandparent should give advice to the other.
6. After a couple of minutes, tell students to swap roles.
7. Tell students to write their own letter titled 'A letter to the children of India'.

Tip: Speaking and writing activities about the theme of a text are a good opportunity for your students to practice the language used in it. Here you can focus on using the language accurately if you like. These kinds of activities also get students to respond to the lessons in the textbook, and to relate them to their lives.

Resource 5: Develop your own English

Here are some tips and links for developing your own reading skills:

- The best way to develop your skills in reading English is to read as much as you can – English newspapers and magazines, etc. Exchange English texts with colleagues and friends. Use a library, if this is possible.
- Read regularly. Find a time to read each week, and if possible, find a quiet comfortable place where you will not be disturbed.
- Use the techniques that you have read about in this unit. Use pictures, titles, sub-titles to get an idea of what the text is about. Read silently for as long as you can. It doesn't matter if you read short extracts.
- Don't try to understand every word. Try to understand the overall message or idea. Don't look up every word in a dictionary – try to guess meanings of words if you can, and just look up key words. Remember that you can read texts as many times as you like.
- Finally, read the things you enjoy. Read stories if you enjoy them, or read cricket news if that's how you like to spend your time.

You may find the following resources useful:

- Stories and poems for learners of English (with activities): http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/stories-poems
- Articles about many different topics for learners of English (with audio and activities): http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/magazine
- BBC news for Asia: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/asia/
- *Times of India* online: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/

Additional resources

- 'How useful are comprehension questions?' by Mario Rinvolucri: http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/how-useful-are-comprehension-questions
- A series of articles by Dave Willis about reading: http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/reading-information-motivating-learners-read-efficiently
- 'Theories of reading' by Shahin Vaezi: part 1, http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/theories-reading; part 2, http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/theories-reading-2
- 'What is reading?' by Adrian Tennant: http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/reading/reading-matters/reading-matters-what-is-reading/154842.article
- 'Success in reading': http://orelt.col.org/module/3-success-reading

References/bibliography

Gupta, S.P. (ed.) (2012) *English (A Textbook for Class X)*, revd edn (revised by K.D. Upadhyay). Noida: Banwari Lal Kaka & Sons (Publishers).

National Focus Group on Teaching of English © National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2006.

Nehru, J. (1949) 'Letter to the children of India', 3 December. Available from: http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2002-11-14/edit-page/27299288_1_grown-ups-eyes-and-ears-beautiful-world (accessed 29 July 2014).

Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following sources for permission to reproduce the material in this unit:

Activity 1: 'The Perfect Life' by Ben Jonson, in the textbook *English: A Textbook for Class X*, NCERT.

'What this unit is about'/Case Study 1: teacher from UPS Kalli Paschim. Permission granted. Photo: Kim Ashmore.

Resource 1: Nehru, J. (1949) 'A letter to the children of India', 3 December.

Every effort has been made to contact copyright owners. If any have been inadvertently overlooked the publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangements at the first opportunity.

Video (including video stills): thanks are extended to the teacher educators, headteachers, teachers and students across India who worked with The Open University in the productions.