

#### ● THINKING AND DISCUSSION 4

Finally, using the same textbook reading text, and with the same class in mind:

- Notice what post-reading activities it suggests.
- Are these appropriate for your students and for the text?
- Is there any way you might adapt or change them?

#### Typical post-reading activities in textbooks

- Read the texts about teens' rooms again and look at the photos. Which one do you like best? Write a description of your ideal room and draw a picture of it. Compare this with your friends.
- Do you think the text is trying to convince you of something? Is it a neutral text or does it show preferences and opinions?
- Do you agree with the author? If you met the writer, what would you ask her or him?
- Based on what you know, is the information in the text true? Where can you check the veracity of this information?
- Make a picture dictionary of the environmental words in the text. Compare this with your friends. Then make a class webpage or poster to help other students. ●

## 5.5 EXTENSIVE READING: READING FOR PLEASURE

The choice of text for this type of reading is very important. In real life, we all enjoy reading different kinds of magazines and books. The same person may also enjoy reading different types of text at different times: a romantic novel at the beach, a detective story in bed, something more serious at other times. On the other hand, some people have strong feelings about specific genres, for example science fiction: some of them love it, while others hate it.

The implication of this is that there should be a range of types of text and themes for the students to read for pleasure, inside or outside the classroom. A class library is a good way of providing this. It should contain different types of reader at the appropriate language level. Fact and fiction, romance, plays, adventure stories... most publishers can provide a huge variety of titles. The language is graded in difficulty, so it is not too hard to find the levels which correspond to your textbook.

Some publishers divide their collections of readers according to a level chart which is organized by the number of 'headwords' in each level, perhaps ranging from 200 at the primary level 1, up to more than 3,000 at the top level. Other series may organize their levels according to grammatical structure.

In addition, readers may be grouped according to the age of their potential users, or by type of English (usually American or British). Other considerations reflect the content - fact or fiction - or whether the reader is an adaptation, with simplified language, of an existing book, or whether it has been written especially for students of English. There is a huge range, and it is important to provide titles which will be of genuine interest to your specific students.

However, it is important to remember that the students' understanding does not only depend on understanding the vocabulary. If the content is interesting, or is something they know about, then they will probably be able to read even quite complex texts.

A good example of how the level of difficulty does not stop learners when they enjoy the topic is the reading that teenagers do when playing video-games. Gamers have to do quite a lot of reading and even elementary students play

games in the English language. On the other hand, if this is not of interest to them, then they will find difficulties on every page! So a class library should contain texts at more than one level of difficulty and with a good variety of topics, style and type.

To make sure your library contains an appropriate range, ask your students what they read in L1. Books, magazines, websites - all these will give you clues as to the subject matter that interests each individual. Movies, too are a good clue (since many readers are linked to them).

### 5.5.1 USING READERS

Some teachers prefer to let the students choose their own book from the class library; others prefer everyone to read the same one. The first way is obviously better for catering for individual interests; the second is better if you want to have class discussions, or to do project work, linked to the book.

'Reading for pleasure' should involve enjoyment!. But how can you check your students' understanding of what they are reading? If you ask them formal comprehension questions, this is likely to spoil their enjoyment. The best solution, perhaps, is to give them some general tasks to do, based on the book, and similar to real life activities.

For example, you can ask them to write or record a short review of the book. The purpose of this will be to inform and guide other potential readers of this text. It should be both *factual* (e.g. the number of pages, genre, summary, author's details, etc) and *subjective* (a personal opinion of what the reader liked or did not like). It could also give advice ("*Read this title if you like crime stories. It's packed with information. Don't try to read too many pages at once.*" etc.). You could also ask two students with different opinions about the book to record their positive and negative views about it, as a starting point for wider discussion.

You may like to devise a star rating system with the class that they can use in their reviews. For example, five stars for *excellent: recommended* and one star for *OK, but not very up to date*. These reviews could be posted on a website, or printed out and kept with the class library, for other students to use.

If the whole class are reading the same book, they could interview each other about it. Different groups could choose different sections or chapters and write suitable questions. These could be written, or done as live interviews.

Again, these interviews could form the basis for a class review of the book.

Some titles lend themselves to further research about the author. The students can surf the web to find out more about him or her, and present the information to the class. Again, different students can take responsibility for finding out about different aspects of the author's life (*family, background, other books, personal life ...*).

The purpose of these activities is to link the reading activity with the expression and exchange of personal opinions. Similarly, you are also linking reading with discussion, writing and project work. This all helps to make reading come alive for the students.

### 5.5.2 READERS AND AUDIO MATERIAL

Many series of readers are accompanied by audio CDs, or recorded material to download from a publisher's website. These can be extremely useful for helping to bring the text to life, and are especially useful for students who respond strongly to their auditory senses.

Good audio recordings will have been made by experienced actors who know how to convey personality, meaning and emotion through their voices. They will be sensitive to the problems of foreign learners, and will know how to keep a balance between sounding natural, while at the same time using appropriate speed and pauses in a way that help, rather than hinder, the students' understanding. In addition, many of these recordings use sound effects and music to further heighten their reality and make them enjoyable to listen to.

An echoing and noisy classroom is not the ideal place for listening to recorded material, so do not be surprised if this audio material does not hold the students' attention in the way you had anticipated. It is worth looking at some of the suggestions in **Chapter 7** for listening activities to see how you might overcome some of these problems. For example, choose short extracts, and give the students a purpose for listening, in the same way that you give them a purpose for reading.

However, if your students can listen online, or in a media centre through headphones, then they will get a lot out of this audio material. They will be able to focus on details of character, emotion and expression which will reinforce and enrich the printed text. Again, it is important to give them a reason for listening, and to allow time for discussion or comment afterwards.

Audio recordings are also useful for providing contextualized pronunciation models, especially for English stress and intonation patterns (see **8.3**). Because the students know the characters and places from the book, they can see *how* the people speak reflects *who* they are and *what* they are saying.

In addition, of course, listening to this recorded material might even inspire your students to produce their own spoken versions of the reader, perhaps working in groups on different parts of it. In this way, reading, listening and speaking in English can be integrated naturally and can provide excellent opportunities for student creativity. • If you also wish to integrate writing, the students can develop their own version of the book, as a play to be performed as an end-of-term presentation.

## 5.6 AUTHENTIC TEXTS

There is often a debate among teachers about the importance of using *authentic texts* for reading (and listening) in English. Very often, this results from a reaction against the *non-authentic* texts found in the textbook. It may also be an unspoken worry about the need to establish the connection between *classroom English* and *English in real life*.

It will be obvious from the preceding chapters in this book that the ultimate goal of teaching English to your students should be to equip them to use the language confidently in the 'real world' - whatever that world consists of for them, now or in the future. In other words, to enable them, as speakers of English, to cope with a wide range of communicative exchanges, written and spoken, involving different types of language and reflecting different social, geographical and personal contexts. In short, to read, listen and respond to *authentic* English texts.

#### • THINKING AND DISCUSSION 5

- Do you use readers with any of your classes?
- If so, which titles have been most successful - and the most unsuccessful (e.g. *interest factor, familiar content, length...*)?
- Can you suggest the reasons?
- How did you introduce the reader to the students?
- How did they read it (*chapter by chapter, at home, in the class...*)?
- What advice would you give to a reader of these titles?