

*Curious?  
.....then look inside!*

If that's your bag, baby - then go for it. And you have yourself a very nice day now.

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McRae, John and Boardman, Roy. *Reading between the Lines*. Cambridge University Press, 1988. Teacher's Book, 87 pp. Student's Book, 120 pp. Two cassettes.

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*Reading between the Lines* is based on the assumption that literary texts and extracts (not to be confused with Literature) can provide a stimulating basis for classwork on language appreciation, reading skills, and oral fluency. The level catered for is upper-intermediate to advanced, and the activities include listening skills, note-taking, discussion, simulation dramas, and a number of reading strategies.

The student's book is organised thematically, and contains a wide range of provocative and challenging material from an almost complete range of genres (novels, drama, poetry, speeches, cartoons, advertisements, songs, newspaper reports). The unit on 'War', for instance, has extracts from Frederick Forsyth, Thucydides, *Asterix and the Chieftain's Shield*, Shakespeare, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, and Winston Churchill. Most of the texts are recorded on the accompanying cassettes.

The activities are varied and original. The unit on 'ideals', for example, includes an exercise asking students to draw a map of the Pleasure Dome after listening to and reading Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*. This is followed by the question: 'Is it possible to draw the

poem's geography? Does the attempt to do so throw any light on the meaning?' (p. 85). Throughout the book, students are encouraged to interact with texts personally, subjectively, emotionally and aggressively, but also critically and analytically. Of particular value is the integration of responses to a literary text with a study of language in action - sentence structure, tenses, parts of speech and vocabulary are meaningfully and communicatively explored. The following is an exercise from Unit 1: Family.

- 2.4 *Basically, the past tense used in the extract has two meanings. One meaning is that of 'used to do', the other refers to events that occurred only once.*
- a) *Find out where these different meanings occur and comment on the contrast between them.*
  - b) *What is the effect of the phrase: 'Sometimes Mrs Morel **would say**...?'*
- (p. 6)

Another exercise, based on Dylan Thomas' *A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London*, includes the following questions:

- a) *Work out the sentence structure of the first 13 lines by thinking about the relationships between 'Never', 'until', 'Shall I'.*
- b) *What is the subject of 'Tells' (line 4)? What does it tell?*

The Teacher's book contains notes on the authors of and background to the extracts, and it offers guidelines, suggested teaching strategies, and answers. For teachers who are realising the limitations of teaching Literature for critical assessment only, and who are keen to incorporate more realistic and meaningful language work while retaining a substantial literary component, *Reading between the Lines* is a comprehensive and stimulating text, with varied and thought-provoking extracts and activities.

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