

# The Reader



**A Lesson Plan by Kieran Donaghy**



## *The Reader*



**Language level:** Intermediate (B1) – Upper Intermediate (B2)

**Learner type:** All ages

**Time:** 90 minutes

**Activity:** Writing a short story, watching a short film, and speaking

**Topic:** Reading and literacy

**Language:** Narrative tenses and vocabulary related to literacy

### Overview

This ESL lesson plan is designed around a moving short film titled *The Reader* and the theme of literacy. In the lesson students write a narrative, watch a short film and discuss literacy strategies.



### Step 1

Put your students into small groups. Ask them to come up with as many different kinds of books as they can in two minutes.

### Step 2

Elicit or explain genres of books such as:

- Action
- Mystery
- Suspense
- Detective
- Romance
- Comic book
- Graphic novel
- Historical fiction
- Science fiction (sci-fi)
- Fantasy
- Children's books
- War
- Non-fiction
- Travel books
- Cookery books
- Self-help books
- History
- Biography
- Auto-biography
- Gothic
- Horror
- Classic Literature
- Modern Literature
- Short stories

### Step 3

Give your students the Reading Discussion Questions. Ask them to discuss the questions in their groups.

1. What do you get out of reading?
2. What's your favourite book genre?
3. Who's your favourite author?
4. Where's your favourite place to read?
5. What are your earliest memories of reading?
6. What was your favourite book growing up?
7. Did your parents read to you when you were a child?
8. What was the last book you read? What was it about?



9. How do you decide what books you're going to read?
10. What books have you recommended to other people?

#### **Step 4**

Hold a plenary discussion based on the questions.

#### **Step 5**

Pair your students and ask them to come up with different strategies for learning how to read or improving reading. Give a few examples such as learning the sound of each letter, reading comics and taking books out of a library.

#### **Step 6**

Get feedback on reading strategies from the whole class.

#### **Step 7**

Write 'illiterate' on the board. Elicit or explain that it is an adjective to describe a person who cannot read or write.

#### **Step 8**

Put your students into small groups. Ask them to imagine that they are an illiterate adult and discuss what problems they would encounter on a daily basis due to their inability to read. Give a couple of examples such as:

"I wouldn't be able to read the instructions when I buy a phone."

"I can't read the street signs if I get lost."

#### **Step 9**

Get feedback from the whole class on problems an illiterate person would encounter on a daily basis.

#### **Step 10**

Tell your students they are going to watch a short film about an illiterate man who learns to read. Ask your students what strategies the man might use to learn to read.

#### **Step 11**

Tell your students as they watch the film their task is to try to notice what strategies the old man uses to improve his reading.

Show the film.

Film: <https://vimeo.com/85710858>



### Step 12

Get feedback from the class and go through the strategies they noticed. The strategies they mention will probably include:

- attending adult literacy classes
- learning the sound of each letter
- playing scrabble
- having a literacy tutorial
- using flash cards
- reading words on a menu
- reading picture books
- writing the name of objects on Post-it notes and putting them on the objects
- reading words on a food packet
- reading comics
- going to a library
- borrowing library books
- spelling words with a magnetic alphabet
- spelling words with alphabet soup

### Step 13

Ask your students the following questions:

- Have you used any of the strategies to help you learn a language?
- Would you use any of the strategies to learn a language?

### Step 14

Give your students the Viewing Questions. Tell your students they are going to watch the film again. As they watch they should answer the questions.

1. What does the man buy in the bookshop?
2. What does the man see after he leaves the bookshop?
3. What are the students learning in the adult literacy class?
4. What word does the man get right in Scrabble?
5. What different object does the man put Post-it notes on?
6. What does the man write on the dirty car?
7. What does the man write with the alphabet soup?
8. What does the man show his friends that he is proud of?
9. Where does he go to see his son?
10. What does his son order?

Show the film again.



### Step 15

Go through the answers to the questions.

#### Answers

1. What does the man buy in the bookshop? Reading materials
2. What does the man see after he leaves the bookshop? A poster advertising a book.
3. What are the students learning in the adult literacy class? The alphabet.
4. What word does the man get right in Scrabble? Cat
5. What different object does the put post-it notes on? Kettle, oven, taps
6. What does the man write on the dirty car? Wash
7. What does the man write with the alphabet soup? Hello sexy
8. What does the man show his friends that he is proud of? A gold star
9. Where does he go to see his son? A bar
10. What does his son say to the barman? A whisky

### Step 16

Put your students into small groups. Give them the Post-viewing Questions and ask them to discuss the questions.

1. Describe the film in your own words. What happened in the story?
2. How does the film make you feel? How did it achieve this? Which elements of the film created this effect?
3. What adjectives would you use to describe the old man?
4. How do you think the young man feels when he discovers his father has read his book?
5. What did you find most memorable about the film?
6. What are some of the key themes the film explores?
7. Who do you think is the intended audience of the film?
8. What do you think is going to happen next in the story?

### Step 17

Hold a plenary discussion based on the questions.

#### Homework

Ask your students to write a composition in the first person singular from the perspective of the old man about his experience of learning to read.

## Reading Discussion Questions



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5. What are your earliest memories of reading?
6. What was your favourite book growing up?
7. Did your parents read to you when you were a child?
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## Viewing Questions



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### About the Author



**Kieran Donaghy** is a freelance award-winning writer, international conference speaker and teacher trainer.

He is the author of books for students and teachers of English as a foreign language. His publications include *Film in Action* (Delta Publishing), *Writing Activities for Film* (ELT Teacher2Writer) and *Video, The Image in ELT* (ELT Council) and *Language Hub* (Macmillan). He trains teachers in Barcelona and online at his specialist teacher development institute, The School for Training.

He is the founder of the independent publisher *Film English* which has won a British Council ELTons Award, an English Speaking Union Award and the MEDEA Award.

He is the founder of The Image Conference and co-founder of the Visual Arts Circle.

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## About Film English



Film English is an independent publisher founded in 2009 specialised in the field of English language teaching and learning. The lesson plans designed around short films, viewing guides for feature-length films and other teaching resources on Film English make up the largest online resource bank of materials for teaching and learning English using film and video. Film English has won many awards including a British Council ELTons Award for Innovation in Teacher Resources, the most prestigious European media in education prize, the MEDEA Award, and an English-Speaking Union Award. Find out more about Film English at: <https://film-english.com/>

## About Film English Club



Membership of Film English Club allows unlimited access to all the lesson plans designed around short films, viewing guides for feature-length films and other teaching resources from the award-winning publisher Film English. Members can download our complete collection of materials and get regular updates each week. Find out more about Film English Club at: <https://film-english.com/club/>

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The School for Training is a centre of excellence in teacher development offering innovative courses to language teachers in the centre of Barcelona and online. The school offers innovative courses on important areas of language pedagogy not normally covered on CELTA or DELTA courses such as how to use short films and videos, the role of empathy in language education, how to introduce social justice issues in the language classroom, and the fifth skill of Viewing in the language curriculum. Find out more about The School for Training at: <https://theschoolfortraining.com/>

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