

Hard Times (Nothing but Facts, Sir!)

Level:	B1+
Time:	60 minutes as a lesson/90 minutes as a teacher training session
Main aims:	To encourage students to relate reading and listening passages to their own experience, as a way of developing critical skills. (If used for teacher training) To focus trainees on the benefits of a communicative methodology.
Subsidiary aims:	To develop skills of listening and reading for gist, and reading for detail. (If used for teacher training) To revise staging of receptive skills lessons.
Suggested timetable fit:	(a) To fit with a lesson centred around civil law generally, or divorce law in particular (especially for legal English students). (b) To fit with other lesson(s) on topic of divorce, or changing social views for general English students.
Materials:	2 worksheets per student.

Procedure:

Stage and stage aim(s)	Timing	Interaction	Procedure
Visualisation (to activate students memories to allow for personalisation of topic)	10	T	<p>Students need to relax. Ask them to close eyes, maybe sit back, or heads on arms on desks in front of them. If a small group in a carpeted room, even lie down? Play very soft, quiet music? Use a version of the following, speaking slowly, with pauses. Adapt for local circumstances.</p> <p>'Imagine you are back at school. You are a student again. Where was your school? How did you go there every day? What did you wear? You're in a classroom. You're learning a foreign language. What is it? English? French? German? Who is your teacher? What does he or she look like? Do you like your teacher? Who is in the class with you? Who are your friends? What do you do in the class? Do you study grammar? Do you read aloud? Do you write sentences? Do you speak? In what language do you speak? How do you feel in this lesson? Do you enjoy it? How do you feel about the foreign language? Do you want to learn it? Why? Why not?'</p> <p>Bring students back to the present. Ask them to stretch. Now, they have 4 minutes to write everything they can remember about their language classes.</p>

		st	
Speaking (to share experiences in topic of the listening)	10	st - st T - st	Sts in groups of 4 or so discuss their experiences, to identify similarities and differences Brief feedback, and summary of general experience for all present (if generalizable) or main differences (if there are such).
Listening for gist (to compare to own experiences)	10	st – st	Tell sts they will listen to a passage about school. What do they think this school is like? What are the teachers like? What do the students do? Play listening (ask if 2 nd listening is needed), same groups discuss the educational environment drawn, and compare/contrast to their own experiences. Each group briefly reports back in feedback. Inform the group that this was a passage from Hard Times by Charles Dickens. His view of education seems to have been somewhat progressive, as witnessed by his mocking the prevailing view of its being purely the passing on of knowledge (facts).
Reading for gist (to help sts to an overview of the passage)	10	st st-st	Give out materials 1, and direct sts to the gist question of exercise 1. Give sts 4 minutes for the reading and 3 for pair discussion, encouraging them to refer to the text in justifying answers. Feedback. Clearly, the gentlemen are only interested in what is useful/utilitarian, while Sissy is interested in what is pleasant, in what she can connect with emotionally.
Reading for detail (to help with a deeper understanding of the text)	10	st st - st	Direct students to exercise 2, and give them 4 minutes to complete. Pairs check before feedback. See recommended answers below.
Speaking (to relate the reading to students own experience)	10	st - st	Ask sts, in groups, to make a list of activities that they do in their classes (as students or as teachers, depending on group) that would be unlikely to feature in Mr Gradgrind's school. Class feedback, what do the students think are the advantages of these activities?
Lesson analysis (if this is a training session with teachers, pre-service or in-service)	20+	st – st T - st	Groups of three or four identify the stages of the lesson that has been done. Trainer monitors and guides with questions about the lesson. Hand out materials 2 and conduct feedback. Elicit as much as possible. See version of materials 2 below, with comments. If this has potential to develop into discussion of methodological points and appropriate classroom activity types, let it, and then the reading in materials 3 can be given out to read at home.
Reading (to wrap up the topic)	10-	st T - st	Handout materials 3. Ask students to answer 'What does Dickens think of teacher education? Do you agree?' Short feedback.

Exercise 2: answers

Are the following statements true, false, or impossible to judge from the passage? Write *T* or *F* or *?* next to each statement.

1. The students are practised at guessing what the teacher wants them to say.

T. The students respond to Mr Bounderby's expression, and quickly learn that he asks questions expecting a 'no' answer.

2. Only Sissy and a few students like flowers. Most of the students don't.

? Most students answer 'no' because they think it's the expected answer. Their answer has nothing to do with their own views.

3. The two gentlemen see 'fancy' as the opposite of 'fact', and oppose it.

T

4. The two gentlemen have plain white plates at home.

? They recommend plain, undecorated plates, so probably have them at home (although they could be terrible hypocrites, and have fancy decorations). And, while white is very likely, they may be plain blue plates. So, very likely true, but we can't know.

5. The two gentlemen do not admit there could be any valid view other than their own.

T. This is why they identify their view with 'taste', they recognise no other possible choice.

Stages of a Reading Lesson

