

Little Dorrit: Merdle's Bank

Lesson type – Vocabulary input followed by reading (with speaking extension)

Level – Upper Intermediate and above.

Main Aim – To develop students' ability to read a text for gist and detail.

Subsidiary Aim – To give students practice in a set of vocabulary concerned with fraud.

Materials – Handouts, internet access (not essential)

Time – 90 minutes

Suggested timetable fit - (a) Connected to a lesson on the theme of investment, or crime

Procedure (Note: Unusually, this lesson starts with language work, in the shape of a vocabulary exercise. This is partly due to the vocabulary load in the texts, but also because for business students the words selected would be worth more work than just that needed to understand the text. If your class would not find this vocabulary useful to work on to this extent, start with the focus on the topic and select vocabulary from the 2 vocabulary exercises to pre-teach, words your students would need to complete the tasks.)

Stage and stage aim(s)	Timing	Interaction	Procedure
Vocabulary 1 (as lang input, & to help sts with passages)	25	T – st st – st T – st st st – st T - st	Tell sts there will be 2 readings about people in financial world, 1 from Dickens, and 1 from the news. Half the class will read one, half the other. But first you will work on some vocabulary which will help, and is useful on the topic generally. Sts in groups of 3 work through worksheet 1. Do first one as an example (all three stages). You could bring in dictionaries to help. Allow 10 minutes for this. Feedback, including concept checking questions. Elicit word stress and drill any problematic words. Sts complete exercise 2 individually as controlled practice. Pairs check. Feedback.
Focus on topic (to focus students on topic)	13	st – st T - st	The global economy has been in financial trouble for some time, and investment is an uncertain business. Students, in groups of 4, have £250,000 to invest. How will they invest it? 8 minutes to decide. Feedback, and elicit/provide more in vocab column (eg commodities/precious metals/currency market/property/stocks and shares/bonds/...return on investment). Help students with more vocab as appropriate. Ask class what would be the worst investment. If it doesn't come up, introduce 'pyramid investment',

			where monies from investors used to pay dividends, but no wealth created. Also known as Ponzi scheme.
Pre-teach vocabulary (to aid sts with the reading)	7	T - st	Pre teach the following vocabulary quickly, for passive understanding only: Inquest, workhouse (a house for poor people managed by local authority), scoundrel, gallows
Gist reading (for sts to develop the skill of skimming for main ideas)	10	st st - st T - st	Divide the class into 2 equal groups. Give one group (A) worksheets 2 & 4, and set them 5 minutes to answer the gist question (question 1 from worksheet 4). Ideally take the second group (B) to the computer room, give them worksheets 3 & 4, and 3 minutes to answer question 1. Pairs check. Feedback in each group (someone has been found out to have run a massive fraud).
Detailed reading (to help students understand how character is drawn with a few words)	20	st st - st st - st	Direct each group to question 2. Allow 10 minutes for individual work for group A, 5 minutes for group B. Give 10 minutes for group collaboration to group A, and 5 to group B. Group B will have 10 minutes left, and should do internet research on more details of the Madoff case (of which there is a lot), on his family, his victims, etc, to further complete the table. (If no computer room, have a laptop with internet access for every 4 or 5 students, or ask a colleague to read up on Madoff and act as a resource on him, answering questions.) Monitor, and help students to answers where necessary, so that their half of the table is reasonably complete. (Time differences as the Dickens text is longer and denser than the Guardian piece.)
Speaking (for students to exchange information and react to the texts)	15	St-st T - st	Match 2 sts from each group into new groups of 4. Sts complete exercise 3. Write the following questions on the board to direct groups to as they finish: What are the similarities and differences between the two cases? What punishment do you think appropriate for these men? Brief feedback can focus on these 2 questions (Merdle would have been hanged, but escaped the gallows by killing himself, while Madoff was sentenced to 150 years in prison).