

The Curse

Introduction

'The Curse' is the tenth in the BritLit series of teacher resource kits.

The Project. The BritLit project was started in 2002 with the intention of providing Portuguese teachers of English in the state sector additional resource material for the extensive reading requirements of years 10 and 11. It is a joint venture between the British Council in Portugal and APPI (Associação Portuguesa de Professores de Inglês.) While aimed at the Portuguese market, the usefulness of the project as an international model is recognised and generic versions of the resources kits are being developed.

The Resource Kits. Much of the material provided is intended to be used with mixed ability classes and while the input from the materials is the same, the output from the students will vary considerably. Other materials are generally classed according to their degree of difficulty using the ALTE levels now adopted by many European countries through the Council of Europe as benchmark criteria for language assessment. (http://www.alte.org/can_do/cef.cfm). The resource kits provide a never-ending source of material for the teacher inasmuch as teachers are asked to contribute their own experiences and ideas to the project; we would like to see the materials mutate and mature with use. One of the advantages of using an electronic form is that each section can easily be personalised; we would be interested to see examples of this approach.

This Kit. The materials presented for class work in this kit are based on Arthur C. Clarke's story 'The Curse'. Like other BritLit kits, it is intended for the development of language development and cultural understanding rather than as a source of literary study. There are four parts: **Characterisation, Context, Word Work, After Reading**, plus a **Teachers' Notes** section. As with all other BritLit productions, this is called a 'kit' to emphasise the fact that you, the teacher, are expected to assemble the component parts yourself, using the parts you require in the order you prefer. Unlike all the other kits to date, however, this one requires more from the teacher in terms of preparation as it contains few completed worksheets, but instead suggestions in the Teachers' Notes as to how to proceed. This is not a course but simply a resource which can be picked over with some items used and others discarded. For this reason, each piece of work, or those within a sub-heading, stand alone and do not require work to have been done on any other worksheet. It is intended that the order in which the work is tackled is largely up to the teacher responding to the needs of their class. However, we would make the following suggestions:

- Some of the material has been designed with preparation for reading the text in mind. In other words, the intention is that these worksheets are to be used **before** the students read the text. The reason is simply that by quoting from the text and dealing with language and content piecemeal in these sections, we assume that this will help the student to a more fluent reading of the text, without the need to break off and consult for meaning.
- We also advise that the work in the section 'Characterisation' is done before the students are asked to read the complete text. This section is designed to 'fast-

- track' students into an appreciation of the situation in the story where no characters at all appear.
- The 'Context' section can be done either before or after the text has been read, as can the work in 'Word Work', although we would recommend that this latter section is tackled after the text has been read.
 - As the title suggests, the section 'After Reading' is to be tackled once all the other work has been completed. It attempts to 'wrap up' the work on the story, and to look forward to alternative texts.
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We very much welcome your contribution to the project. Much of the material in the current kit has been contributed by state school teachers working in collaboration with the project team and we invite you to contribute your ideas and experience so that future versions of this material will present an even wider choice of opportunities for students to explore language and culture through literature.

The story 'The Curse' is a story of an apocalyptic future: the scene is a post nuclear war Britain, and the only moving thing is the river. The story takes us through the failed tactic of deterrence and then focuses on a remaining gravestone in what is left of the church. Reading the inscription as it disappears beneath the waves, we become aware that it is Shakespeare's gravestone, and that the destroyed town is Stratford upon Avon.

Acknowledgements

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Section	Worksheet or Activity	Content	CEF
<i>Characterisation</i>	Pre-reading activity	Chunking, leading to narrative building	B1/2
	Three pictures	Two paintings of Dali and a photograph of post-atomic bomb Hiroshima provoke story telling without characters.	A2/B2
<i>Context</i>	Stratford and Shakespeare	Two connected texts with photographs tell the tale of modern day Stratford and its history, with some biographical detail about Shakespeare	
	Defence	Three texts look at contemporary issues in the defence of Western Europe: NATO, and two texts on 'Star Wars' –one by the US Dept. Of Defense and the other a commentary by Greenpeace.	
	The Responsibility	A well known poem depicting the dilemma of who is responsible for weapons of mass destruction.	
	Poets' View	Two poems about the futility of grand endeavour and pride: one by 19 th century poet Shelley and one by 21 st century poet John Agard	
	Seeing into the Past	Light travels through space at a finite speed. Does this mean when we look at the stars that we are looking at the past?	
	Grave Humour	A look at some inscriptions of English gravestones – not all are as serious as you might expect!	
	Biography + Biography worksheet	A brief look at the life and work of author Arthur C. Clark, who wrote 2001-A Space Odyssey among many other works	Worksheet B2/C1

Word Work	Language in Use	Use of passive voice to talk about things that are happening but unobserved by any people	
	Glossary	Contextualised meanings of some key words. Some meanings in Portuguese	
After Reading	Comprehension Check	Students have a choice of three activities to demonstrate how well they know the story	
	Further Reading	A.L. Kennedy's grim love story 'Not Anything to do with Love' takes place in a crematorium during a funeral. Need we say more?!	
Teacher's Notes		This section contains ideas and suggestions on how to use the raw material presented in Characterisation, Context and After Reading sections. It has answers for some of the questions posed in Word Work . Note that this kit is different from the previous nine in that teachers have to prepare their own worksheets from the materials provided	