

Reading house

Topic

Describing houses, buildings and personal taste

Aims

- To learn and practise vocabulary for describing houses
- To develop reading skills
- To practise speaking and discussion skills

Age group

12- adult

Level

B1 / B2

Time

60 –90 minutes

Materials

1. Reading house Student worksheet
2. Internet links: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/homes/> BBC website on homes
<http://www.architecture.com/Explore/Home.aspx> UK architecture webpage
<http://www.urbanspaces.co.uk/> - Website with usual images of loft spaces
<http://www.countryliving.com/remodeling-renovation/home-makeovers/g1209/before-and-after-home-makeovers/?slide=21> - Country Living before and after home makeover images

Introduction

A good selection of pictures of houses from the UK would greatly enhance this lesson. Interiors of houses might also be useful for the discussions and activities relating to taste. You could also search for video clips of home improvement programmes to show students.

Sources for pictures are estate agent's websites which have photos of interiors and exteriors with a description of rooms. House magazines or the property supplement of a Sunday broadsheet could provide visuals and adverts. Try to get a picture of some loft/warehouse developments to support the reading text.

Procedure

1. Task 1 – Describing house	<p>You can introduce this topic in a variety of ways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the title 'Reading houses' How could you 'read' a house? What might this mean? • Bring a selection of pictures of houses in the UK and ask students to describe them and say which ones they like • If you have higher levels you can discuss the cross cultural aspect in more detail. House types can depend on climate. <p>With all levels run through each feature round the class after the students have discussed in pairs. Bring in personal contributions which will help students talk about their own homes in the following exercise: Do you think shutters are important? Why do you have shutters? Do you prefer sleeping in total darkness or with a bit of light. Most houses haven't got shutters in the UK but people like curtains or blinds at windows. Do you have curtains in your home? Have you got a garden? Do you ever eat outside? How often?</p>
2. Task 2 – Describe your home	<p>Get your students to work in pairs and describe their own homes. Prepare lower levels carefully. Use your home in the UK and any pictures if you have some. Elicit the question forms from the prompts.</p> <p>Pre teach necessary vocabulary for low levels and leave prompts to help them on the board: old, modern, rural, in a town, in the countryside.</p> <p>Students could also do a describe and draw activity. Put students in pairs. They must ask for enough information to draw a plan of their partner's house. They should only look at each other's drawings at the end. For lower levels this task would need guidance and review of key prepositions like next to/in front of/on the left/right.</p> <p>The describe and draw can also be done with a whole class working with you. Give a basic floor plan of your flat/home. Describe it as a dictation or invite questions like: Where's your bedroom? Is there a dining room?</p>
3. Task 3 – Read and find out	<p>Read out the first questions and then give out the text for students to read. Once you have given them time to read check their answers. Then get them to work in pairs to work through the true / false statements.</p>

4. Task 4 – Houses in your country	<p>The amount of language generated here depends on the language level. Lower level groups can write four sentences in pairs and then compare with the whole class. Do a couple of examples on the board with the whole class before they start: The historic centres of cities in my country are very important. Many buildings are restored and people want to live in flats in the old centres .</p> <p>Higher levels might use these pointers for discussion or could be put in small groups or pairs to develop a written paragraph or an oral presentation on the topic.</p>
5. Task 5 – Your ideal home	<p>You could use some pictures of unusual homes or very different interiors to warm up this exercise. Ask students for their reactions: What do you think of this room? Do you like modern furniture like this? Would you live on a boat? Why not?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If students are intermediate level and up you could give them a selection of pictures to discuss in small groups before they tell each other about their ideal home. If you find students are enthusiastic about this task it could be followed up with a written description. • If a class know each other well you can even play this as a guessing game. Each student secretly writes a short 2 -3 sentence description of their ideal home. Read them all out to the group: Whose ideal home is this?
6. Task 6 – Changing rooms: your taste	<p>If you can get a picture sequence showing a room decorated in different ways (see House magazines) it will help explain the concept. Alternatively, look for some online clips of ‘house makeover’ shows. You could ask students to make a note of changes before and after.</p>
6. Task 7 – Discussion: Flying the nest	<p>Depending on the age and interest of your students, this task could lead to discussions about going away from home to study, life on a campus or in a hall of residence/flat share, parental control, economic independence. It can be helpful to ask at which age your students feel they are considered an adult in their country? This does not mean the legal age of consent / voting but the perceived age of ‘maturity’. This can influence how many people live apart from their parents.</p> <p>Use your own experience in this discussion but be careful to make it clear that this is not necessarily true for all British students. More and more students and young people in the UK are choosing to stay at home into their 20s for economic reasons.</p> <p>Note that in some cultures it is unusual to move away from your family to study or to seek out an independent life. Refer to popular programmes like ‘Friends’ if they are shown in your host country.</p>

Contributed by

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