

READING

*between*

THE LINES

Integrated language and  
literature activities

*John McRae and  
Roy Boardman*

TEACHER'S BOOK

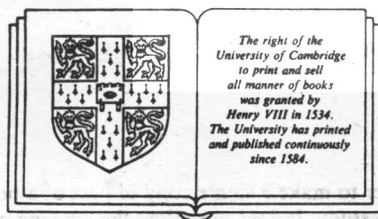
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# Thanks

We would like to thank all those dedicated Italian teachers who have worked closely and consistently with us on these materials over many years. Special thanks are due to *Jeremy Hunter* for seeing the typescript through its several versions.

J M  
R B

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# Introduction

*Reading between the lines* is for upper intermediate and more advanced students of English as a foreign language. It has two main aims:

- 1 To improve and develop students' *understanding and use of the language* through the reading and discussion of literary texts.
- 2 To awaken students' appreciative and critical faculties and so encourage their *development as readers of literature*.

We do not see these aims as distinct: it is our conviction that the intermediate/advanced foreign-language learner should, and usually wishes to, progress to the reading of literature, while it is also true that literature makes an irreplaceable contribution to the development of communicative competence. In this definition of the place of literature in the teaching of English as a foreign language, *the ability to read literary texts with pleasure and understanding is a fundamental component of that communicative competence of the educated native speaker which is the final goal of foreign students and their teachers.*

The structure of each of the ten theme-based units reflects this double aim.

STRUCTURE	EXAMPLE
<b>Unit</b>	<b>Unit One</b>
Quotation (from a unit text)	<i>We're a family, aren't we?</i>
<p><b>Stage 1 Theme</b></p> <p>A preliminary fluency activity involving a combination of reading, listening, writing and predominantly speaking. The activity is designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– raise awareness of the unit theme</li> <li>– relate it to the individual feelings, opinions and experiences of the students</li> <li>– initiate the exchange of students' feelings, opinions and experiences</li> </ul>	<p>Song: Cat Stevens, 'Father and Son'. Recording. Visuals.</p> <p>Group work, leading to class discussion on family problems, especially parent-child relationships and how problems might differ from country to country. Students make notes on the outcome of the discussion.</p>

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STRUCTURE	EXAMPLE
<p>– provide opportunities for the recall of relevant language</p> <p>– by means of all these, prepare the way for the literary texts</p> <p>Various stimuli are used in Stage 1: songs, visuals, quotations, short texts illustrating different or contrasting aspects of the theme.</p>	
<p><b>Stage 2 Text A</b></p> <p>The first literary text, which the reading incentives, questions, pair and group activities help to place in the context of students' feelings, opinions and experiences. The student receives the writer's contribution to the theme almost as he or she receives fellow students' contributions. The student is also encouraged to examine the writer's special use of language, though most work is generally reserved for later.</p>	<p>From <i>Sons and Lovers</i> by D.H. Lawrence.</p> <p>– Family outsiders, hating and loving one's parents in adolescence.</p> <p>– Paragraph construction, effect of past-tense narration, character descriptions (contrast with Dickens, <i>Hard Times</i>).</p>
<p><b>Stage 3 Text B</b></p> <p>At this stage there is sometimes only one text and the more literary questions are introduced at Stage 4.</p> <p>This text extends and deepens responses to the theme. The relationship between text and students' feelings, opinions and experiences is maintained.</p> <p><b>Text C</b></p> <p>With the third text, it becomes fruitful to compare and contrast ways in which the authors present their themes. Close reading, analysis and discussion take a more literary turn; the emphasis is on the way writers use language to convey their meanings.</p>	<p>From <i>Chicken Soup with Barley</i> by Arnold Wesker.</p> <p>Family relationships, different attitudes of sons and daughters, characters and roles of fathers and mothers.</p> <p>From <i>A Night Out</i> by Harold Pinter.</p> <p>Interpreting stage directions, functions of stage directions.</p>

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<p><b>Stage 4 Text D</b></p> <p>A further text sharpens the literary focus at this point in most units (with the exception of Units 2 and 9).</p>	<p>From <i>Emma</i> by Jane Austen. Understatement, irony (<i>Does Jane Austen's way of writing about family difficulties make it easy, or difficult, to identify them?</i>).</p>
<p><b>Stage 5 Simulation</b></p> <p>The simulation is a means by which the ideas, feelings and viewpoints that the students have derived from the unit can be assembled and put to a specific use, so providing fluency practice. Each simulation has a written product – a letter, a report, etc.</p>	<p>Students simulate aspiring social workers. The object of the simulation is to write to the Social Services Authority about careers in family advice centres.</p>
<p><b>Stage 6 Language</b></p> <p>The presence of several texts on related themes gives rise to an interesting general language point. Students return to the texts in their investigation of this language point and produce passages or notes as a way of focusing attention on it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Communication through, without and in spite of <i>dialogue</i>.</li> <li>– Students write notes on a possible dialogue between Mr Woodhouse and his daughter in the Jane Austen passage, which has no dialogue.</li> </ul>
<p><b>POSTSCRIPT</b></p> <p>The postscripts to each unit show that discussion of the theme could go on and on; sometimes they will open up new areas for talk, or for written work. They show that there can be no simple 'conclusions' to draw. The Teacher's Book deliberately makes no comment on the Postscript texts.</p>	<p><i>All happy families resemble one another, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.</i></p> <p>Leo Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i></p>

Translated into terms of 1½ – 2 hour lessons, we have found that the following scheme, as long as it is used flexibly, works well in practice.

*Lesson 1* Stages 1 and 2. It is occasionally advisable, however, to spend a whole lesson on Stage 1.



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*Lesson 2* Stage 3. There are times, for example in Unit 7, when this will become two lessons on account of the sharper literary focus and increased difficulty.

*Lesson 3* Stage 4. The increased literary focus makes it worth giving a whole lesson to this stage. Include preparation for Stage 5, the simulation, either in class or as homework.

*Lesson 4* Stages 5 and 6. When necessary, the re-reading and written work at Stage 6 can be done at home.

This general scheme makes the book suitable for a wide range of teaching/learning situations. Classes using it might or might not be going on to a formal study of literature, they might or might not have commenced work on set books. Whatever the situation, the scheme ensures that the two complementary aims remain sides of the same coin, though the teacher may decide to focus on one of them.

## The language focus

The teacher may decide to focus on improving and developing the class's understanding and use of the *language*. It is self-evident that exposure to literary texts will increase sensitivity to language; we assume, however, that students need guidance in their *interaction with the texts*. Reading literature differs fundamentally from reading anything else in that the relationship that normally holds between the text and the real world is absent: the writer invents it as he or she goes along, and the reader is required to invent it again for him or herself. An aspect of the real world that must come into play, however, in relation to this re-invention, is the reader's self: the *set* of his or her experience, opinions, feelings, aspirations and so on. In the interpretation of literary texts, the writer's set (as manifested in the text itself) and the reader's set are pitted against each other so that such things as whether or not an experience is shared by author and reader, whether the reader believes that a specific attitude of mind is possible or acceptable, whether he or she is capable of feeling a particular emotion, acquire great importance. It is for this reason that *Reading between the lines* provides plentiful opportunities for students to share feelings and opinions, to recount individual experiences, and to bring these to bear on the texts. Where we expect this to happen, and where, therefore, we cannot suggest what the content of student responses might be, this Teacher's Book uses the term 'open response'.

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The kind of language practice that *Reading between the lines* provides is *fluency practice*. Students are not expected, in any particular activity, to produce language in predetermined patterns; they are not required to select from any restricted area of syntax, vocabulary, communicative functions and so on – all that matters is the degree of success with which they convey, in speech or writing, what they mean.

Fluency practice of the kind you will find in this book is, in our view, essential to the foreign language student's learning. There are many reasons why this is so, of which the following four are fundamental.

- 1 Students need the challenge of having to call on the whole range of language they have learnt in attempting to convey specific meanings.
- 2 Where the language needed to express a particular meaning is not available, the student, like the native speaker, has to 'invent' language – hence the occurrence of neologism and metaphor, for example. Only fluency practice activities offer this possibility.
- 3 In effective and interesting speech and writing, the user ranges from specific to general, and this variety greatly facilitates communication. Statements are accompanied by examples, evidence is presented to back up opinions, systems of belief are related to the palpable world. *Reading between the lines* not only gives ample opportunity to vary expression in this way, but also actively encourages it by asking for examples, evidence and the relating of abstractions to things experienced.
- 4 Language is generally no better than the speaker's or writer's understanding of the situation. The extensive use that fluency practice makes possible, together with the reading and other related activities that prepare for such practice, assist the development of such understanding. As the student progresses through a unit, his or her thinking and feeling about the topic is deepened and enriched, making for more effective personal expression.

Look at this example of a typical group activity from *Reading between the lines*, in which the students pit their own experiences of family life against the presentation of an aspect of family life in Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. The following questions precede the text and guide the student's reading of it:

- a) Why is the father an outsider in the home?
- b) How old is Paul?
- c) What does Paul dislike most about his father?
- d) Can we ever see a positive side to the father's nature?

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The instructions for the paired discussion follow the text as follows:

Discuss the answers you have found to the questions, before going on, and, if you wish, relate each one to your personal experience of family life by talking about the following points with a partner. The letters (a) to (d) relate the points to the questions you have answered.

- a) Think of an outsider in your own family, or in a family you know well. What is his/her influence on family life?
- b) Is it common at Paul's age for young people to feel they hate their fathers and mothers, or conversely have a very strong attachment to them?
- c) Have you ever felt strong dislike for a parent's behaviour or attitudes? What attitudes does the son dislike in Cat Stevens's song?
- d) What are the positive sides of *your own* nature, do you think, from the point of view of other members of your family?

We firmly believe that the more frequent the fluency practice, the greater the possibility of observable success in language learning – whether the teacher is present to monitor such practice or not. In *Reading between the lines*, the content of fluency practice activities is very personal; students are given opportunities to express what they feel and think about matters they really care about.

Towards the end of each unit, students have delved deep into the topic: they have examined their own attitudes towards it, they have been exposed to the attitudes of writers and of fellow students, and they have perhaps developed new attitudes of their own. It is useful at this point to get them to look back at all this in a single activity. This is the purpose of the *simulation* in each unit; the class's thoughts, feelings and conflicting attitudes are gathered together for a purpose, in order to perform a specific task. The task is a *double* one, providing fluency practice in both speech and writing.

The improvement in students' language use to which *Reading between the lines* will contribute is brought about, however, not only by constant practice, but also by constant *evaluation of language use*. The language of the texts, which is regarded as language used for real communicative purposes, is being examined all the time, while the final activity of each unit draws attention to some generalisation: the language of contrast, simile and metaphor, sexist language, and so on.

To summarise, *Reading between the lines* brings about an improvement in the student's use of English by:

- a) exposure to a wide range of texts;
- b) extensive fluency practice;
- c) reflection on the language.

### **The literature focus**

The teacher may decide to focus on the awakening of students' appreciative and critical faculties in order to encourage their development as *readers of literature*.

The 'set books' which are normally part, if not the whole, of the literature syllabus cannot offer a sufficient range of literary expression for the achievement of this aim; while *Reading between the lines* offers a wide range of forms, styles, periods and authors.

The 'outline of literature' approach, with its emphasis on history, movements, the personal details of authors, influence, and so on, and its neglect of textual study, has even less to contribute to the student's development as a reader of literature; whereas *Reading between the lines* is based on the reading of texts.

The approach through literary criticism, with its comparison of methods of analysis and of conflicting evaluations, is at its best dependent on the student's direct knowledge of the texts under discussion and therefore on his or her previously-acquired literary competence; *Reading between the lines* does not assume such competence – on the contrary, it aims at helping students to acquire it.

In its concentration on the texts themselves, the book gets students to look at the ways in which literature uses language for specific ends; it therefore directs attention at familiar processes such as lexical selection and syntactic variety, as well as more specifically literary devices – rhyme, rhythm, deviations from the norm, modes of character and scene presentation, to name but a few.

The texts have been selected *not* in consideration of their literary 'importance', but because of:

- their contribution to a particular non-literary theme;
- their inherent interest;
- the language features they incorporate;
- their ability to stand alone, cut off from the works of which they are part, as 'communicative acts'.


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A further consideration has been the need to present a comprehensive range of kinds and levels of difficulty, and a number of the activities are designed to assist students to acquire the skills needed to tackle such difficulties: see Unit 7 Text B, for example, on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Unit 9 Text C on Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, and Unit 6 Text E on Dylan Thomas's *A Refusal to Mourn*.

The texts have been ordered according to topic. Contemporary texts are mixed with older works so that you will find a living novelist rubbing shoulders with a seventeenth-century poet. This arrangement adds variety, enriches the topic approach, and helps to highlight stylistic variation.

## **The recordings**

The recordings on the cassettes should not, if the book is to achieve what it sets out to achieve, be considered optional. *Listening to literature* is pleasurable, illuminating and appropriate; it has, of course, little to do with practical listening skills, but everything to do with an added dimension in the interpretation of texts. Advice on the use of specific recordings is given in the unit notes.

For copyright reasons it was not possible to publish every single text on cassette. However, most of the texts are recorded and are indicated in both the Student's and Teacher's Books by the symbol  .

## **Conclusion**

Although you, the teacher, might be interested in one or the other focus, language or literature, you must remember that a different focus does not entail a different way of using the book. The language-literature aims are, we repeat, complementary, the book has been organised to make them so, and you cannot achieve one without achieving the other. Whichever focus you decide on, the following order of work on the units is recommended:

Unit 1 First  
Unit 2  
Unit 3  
Unit 4  
Unit 5  
Unit 6  
Unit 7

} After Unit 1 and before Units 8, 9, 10 but  
in any order.

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Unit 8 } After Units 1 – 7  
Unit 9 }  
Unit 10 Last

The teacher's notes on each unit provide a running commentary including suggested answers to questions, background information, and advice on methodology and teaching techniques. Brief information on all the authors included in *Reading between the lines*, for you to use as you wish, appears in the appendix.

Before you begin preparing your first lesson and reading the unit notes, we suggest you read the Dos and Don'ts that follow.

### **Some dos and don'ts about using this book**

#### **DO**

remember literature is language  
bring out the students' own experience  
encourage students to evaluate texts in relation to themselves – this is the first step on the way to critical appreciation  
trust the questions and activities to help you  
allow your own experience and feelings to emerge; relate the texts to yourself too  
encourage students to find out for themselves about authors / texts / historical background, etc.  
be prepared for all kinds of reaction to the texts!  
enjoy the book – reading should be a pleasure; your enjoyment will communicate itself to the students  
use the cassettes

#### **DON'T**

be put off because a text seems difficult; the questions and activities are designed to help come to grips with it  
impose your own ideas; nor, however, keep your ideas too much to yourself  
think of literature as having a capital L  
feel you have to do every unit, or every text in the units you do  
be afraid to dislike a text  
expect your students to like every text and every activity

# 1 Family

*We're a family, aren't we?*

The book begins with a topic to which every student can contribute. Everyone has a family, and no family is perfect. Students are encouraged to compare their family experiences and their feelings with each other and with the characters in the texts. It will help students to get to know each other and to become accustomed to the idea of referring texts to their own experience.

## 1.1 Theme

The song shows some aspects of the so-called 'generation gap'. Students will probably have had similar experiences of unwanted or irrelevant advice from parents. The son wants to leave – quite simply he has had enough of being 'ordered to listen'.

Elicit similar feelings. Have students ever felt like running away from home? Who is right? Is there right and wrong in the matter? Can we have sympathy with the father? Do students ever feel as alone as the son does?

The first two points of the unit show how exchange of experiences, opinions and ideas takes place in *Reading between the lines*. The discussion in 1.1 is done in pairs while 1.2 enables students to pool the results of discussion and provides an opportunity for each individual to select what he finds most interesting and/or relevant.

It is advisable, during pair, group and class discussion, to avoid interrupting with language comments and corrections. Help students to convey their meanings, by all means, but foster the importance of content.

**1.2** Experiences of family life always differ from individual to individual, but we must also remember that relationships within the family, and family traditions, vary enormously from country to country. If your class is a monolingual group, the discussion will mainly hinge on the contrasts between family life in the

students' own country, and British family life as represented by the teacher and/or texts. Discussion will be much fuller, of course, with multilingual groups.

## 2.1 Text A D.H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers*

### PROCEDURE

- i) Students listen to the recording and follow the text.
- ii) They read the pre-reading questions.
- iii) They read the text silently, looking for evidence which will suggest answers to the questions.
- iv) They talk about their answers with a partner. The four points (a) to (d) which follow the text are 'open response' aspects of the matters raised by the comprehension questions, and explicitly encourage students to relate text to personal feelings, opinions and experiences. Point out that comprehension question (a) couples with open response question (a), etc.

### VOCABULARY POINTS

Dialect: 'I'll lay my fist about thy y'ead', etc. The use of 'thee/thou' (second person) is still quite common in some Northern, Midland, and Western dialects in England. This passage uses Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire dialect. Dialect will, of course, be found recurrently throughout the book, especially in texts from earlier periods.

*whoam* home

*doesna/dost* don't / do you

*the scotch* (a rare expression, its meaning is relatively clear)  
the only interruption or negative factor

*as* that (l.39)

*cobbled* repaired (only of footwear) (cf. cobbler)

*pit-bottle* in which he took water to the pit to drink while at work

*iron goose* a kind of small anvil

*moleskin* not real moleskin, but a smooth fabric resembling it

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- a) Because he spends the day away from home, in another world, down the mine, and when he comes home he finds difficulty in adjusting to this other world. As a result he reacts violently, is left alone, excluded and feared.
- b) The chapter 'The Young Life of Paul' does not give Paul's age, but students will imagine he is in his early teens.



## Family

- c) Probably his bullying (cf. 'he was dangerous' (l.3), and the fifth paragraph, from l.15).
- d) Yes, when he is working at home.

- 2.2**
- a) First, some understanding is shown at 'He would dearly have liked the children to talk to him'. This is built upon in the conversation that follows. The whole description of the father cobbling, soldering etc. gives a more sympathetic insight into his character, showing him in a creative, absorbed attitude, in complete contrast with the rest of the passage.
  - b) Other words used to refer to Mr Morel, 'his father': he / the collier / the man / the father / your father / Morel. The frequent changes make us wonder about his identity within the family – the 'outsider' effect is strengthened.
  - c) Because (as in 2.1a) he feels excluded, uncomfortable, not a real part of the home. He realises the situation is a difficult one. Whether he fully realises what the others think of him is debatable.
  - d) This question leaves a lot of room for discussion. It is clearly not a particularly satisfactory relationship. Useful guiding vocabulary: one-sided, lacking communication, acceptance, rejection, tolerance.
  - e) Open response.
  - f) Open response.

- 2.3** The narrative flows easily from one paragraph to another, and the smooth transition from one aspect of the theme to another is achieved by the simplest of means. 'And' and 'Then' give the piece an almost biblical tone.

The passage is about *people*, and people are kept in focus by constant reference to them at the beginnings of the paragraphs (Paul, Morel, personal pronouns). The one-line, single-sentence paragraphs in the conversation between Paul and his father emphasise the awkwardness of the relationship. The final paragraph is longer than the others, and the sentences which make it up are also generally longer, to bring out the contrast in its content. Morel is relaxed, happy, satisfied, and the description of him working is relaxed too. Notice that its sentences are again linked very simply.