

TODAY YOU WILL...

...BE CHALLENGED AND ENCOURAGED TO EXPRESS YOUR VIEWS ON AN IMPORTANT ISSUE WITH CONFIDENCE

OFF THE PAGE

You're not the only one tired of revisiting the same old topics year after year, so why not take a tip from Salim Foughali, and take your students beyond the textbooks?

Another year, another textbook, and another curriculum to follow... Are you not tired of hearing: "Sir, there's no *point*"? Well, I was and still am. For the past few years now, therefore, I have not used textbooks to do my lessons. The 'click' came with a year 9 and a year 10 class who were up for a challenge and were keen to do something different. They wanted to be able to talk, but without being limited to "these boring topics" that they were revisiting each year. So I tried to think about how to combine what we were doing at the time (opinions) and come up with something interesting that everyone would be willing to be involved in

and actually have an opinion on.

This lesson is aimed at KS4 students mainly, as it deals with a serious issue: the conflict in Syria. Obviously, you can choose to discuss anything you feel will inspire your class. The aim is to create a debate in which students really take part and share their views as part of working on opinions and, especially, expressing agreement and disagreement. By building up learners' confidence with short but targeted activities, they become confident enough to speak with passion and feeling, and not just say "c'est super" or "c'est ennuyeux".

STARTER ACTIVITY

You need to grasp students' interest straight away. Record your voice reading a short piece about the situation in Syria, so you can play it to the class, with the text appearing slowly as they listen. To make this more captivating, add pictures that show up at appropriate points. At the end of the listening activity, ask the question: "*Est-ce qu'on doit aider la Syrie?*" Before the main activities that are designed to help answer this question, ask the students to write three adjectives on their mini-white boards and tell them to swap with whomever they want in the class. This will be their homework: use the adjectives that your classmate gave you in three different sentences on the topic of Syria.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

1 TARGETED QUESTIONS

Because the topic is so important and vast you have to target your activities. Begin with the question asked in the starter. It requires some vocabulary to be able to hold a conversation, so in order to help learners build up a bank of relevant words, identify specific areas for discussion. For example, you could start by focusing on: *La liberte et la violence en Syrie*. Display the first part of two sentences that will enable students to search for more vocabulary related to the topic, such as '*Il n'y a pas de liberte en Syrie car...*' and '*Il y a de la violence en Syrie parce que...*' In groups of four, learners should come up with ways of completing both sentences.

2 TARGETED QUESTIONS

Get students to write their sentences on Post-it notes, and exchange them with another group. Each individual must then copy the two sentences into his or her own book, and write





HOME LEARNING

> As well as or instead of the sentence homework described in the starter activity, you could get students to write a letter to the French government, either asking it either to act in Syria, or to refrain from doing so, depending on their personal opinion.

+ STRETCH THEM FURTHER

STUDENTS CAN BE SHOWN CLIPS TO GIVE THEM MORE DETAILS ON THE CONFLICT, AND THUS INSPIRE FURTHER AND DEEPER CONVERSATION. TO STRETCH MORE ABLE LEARNERS, ASK THEM TO RESEARCH AND WRITE ABOUT AN ISSUE THAT THEY FEEL IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT, AND PRESENT THEIR FINDINGS TO THE CLASS.

+ ABOUT THE EXPERT



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SUMMARY

another sentence under each, agreeing or disagreeing, using previously discussed prepositions such as *selon moi/a mon avis/d'apres moi/je pense que/je crois que* (this vocabulary could be displayed on the whiteboard, or on cards stuck to the groups' tables). Collect the books at the end of the activity, to be checked and returned.

To check the outcomes of the lesson, you will have to go back to the main question: *Est-ce qu'on doit aider la Syrie?* Ask your students to stand up and walk around the class. When you blow your trumpet, whistle, clap your hands or whatever you have decided to do to make a signal, tell them to grab a

partner and discuss the question, using their book with the sentences in it as a support. Let them talk for one minute and signal again when the time is up. Move around the class yourself as they hold their discussions, so you can give appropriate and targeted feedback; this is a great opportunity for you to praise those who do not usually speak much in lessons.