

Language through Literature
A sample lesson

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This lesson can be used with students attending the biennio of high schools, in particular: Liceo Linguistico, Liceo Classico and Liceo Scientifico.

You could plan this kind of lesson once a week.

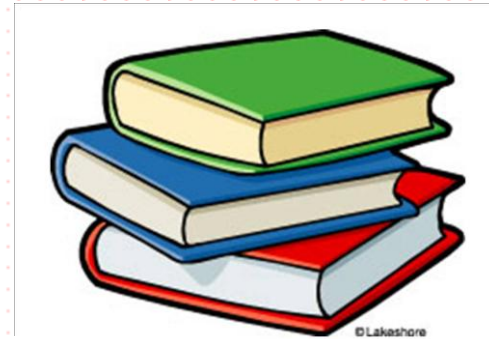
You could apply it to any kind of text:

- articles taken from newspapers
- songs
- literary texts
- compositions written by your students themselves
- your students' school text

For this lesson in particular, a literary text has been chosen. The text will be taken from an abridged and easier version of the original novel.

What do you need for your lesson?

- dictionaries
- a guide to synonyms
- a CD player
- the students' book



The lesson will be planned on a passage from

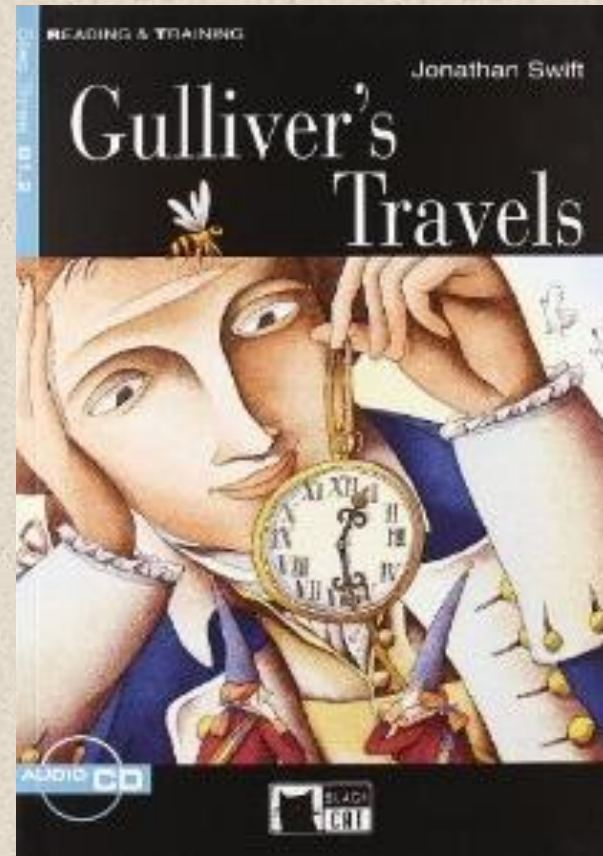
Jonathan Swift

Gulliver's Travels

CIDEB – Black Cat

2003

Step 3 B1.2



Things to do:

1. Choose a passage
2. Be honest and help yourself with dictionaries,...
3. Choose the items to work on
4. Choose the right order of things to work on

N.B. This lesson is planned on a passage, but the ideas suggested here can be applied to the whole book.

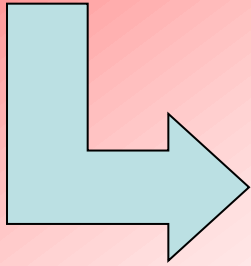
This is the passage chosen for this lesson.

The next day the Emperor of Lilliput came to see me again. I tried to speak to him in English, but he did not understand me. I tried all the languages I knew, but he still did not understand me. He stayed about two hours, and then he went away. He left some soldiers in charge of me.

What is the next step?

You choose to work on the vocabulary first.

- A student of yours starts reading the passage



- correct his pronunciation
- help him with the right accent
- ask your class to pay attention to some items in the text
- ask your class some questions

(ex.: what is this? what do you know about this? Have you ever come across that?...)

N.B. The items chosen are part of the vocabulary in the sense that they do not determine the structure of any sentence.

The items you have chosen to work on are the ones written in a different colour

The **next** day the Emperor of Lilliput came to see me again. I tried to **speak to** him in English, but he did not understand me. I tried all the languages I knew, but he still did not understand me. He **stayed** about two hours, and then he went away. He left some soldiers **in charge of** me.

Now you are ready to start your work on the text. Let's start from the first item in the passage.

You call your class' s attention to the first item → *next*

1. What does it mean? → *seguito, successivo*
2. How many ways does your class know to express the same idea? → *following*
3. You can ask your class to complete the grid

Item	Category	Antonym	Verb	Further Information
<i>Next</i>				
<i>Following</i>				

The grid suggests a lot of hints to study and activity.

You can take the chance to review the use of *next* and *the next*. You can also tell your class about *last* and *the last*.

Examples:

I' ll finish it *next* year.

To cut the meat is *the next* thing to do.

I saw her *last* Friday.

It was *the last* thing I wanted to do.

- What is the difference between *next/last* and *the next/the last*?
- When do you use the former?
- When do you use the latter?

You can suggest some activities on the adjective **following**, as well.

- The verb related to it is **to follow**. What kind of verb is it?
- You can review the formation of the simple past and the past participle of the regular verbs.
- Ask your students to complete the grid.

Infinitive	Simple past	Past participle
To talk		
To love		
To try		
To rob		
To stay		

Now, you can skip to the second item → to speak

You could start by asking your students what the difference between **parlare** and **dire** is. Then you can ask them to complete the grid.

Italian	parlare	dire	raccontare	chiacchierare
English				

After this you can plan some activities on **say** and **tell** as well.

You could also give your students some

- idiomatic expressions
- phrasal verbs

and then give them some exercises:

- fill in the blanks with the right verb
- fill in the blanks with the right preposition
- synonyms/antonyms
- idiomatic English
- vocabulary building



Now it is the turn of the verb **to stay**. In the text it is in the simple past form → **stayed**.

You could ask your students to compare the verbs

- **to stay**
- **to stand**

What is the difference between them?

When do you use the former?

When do you use the latter?

You could also give some examples:

Why don ' t you stay here with me?

Paul is staying at the seaside for the next two weeks.

You have to stand up when the headmaster comes in!

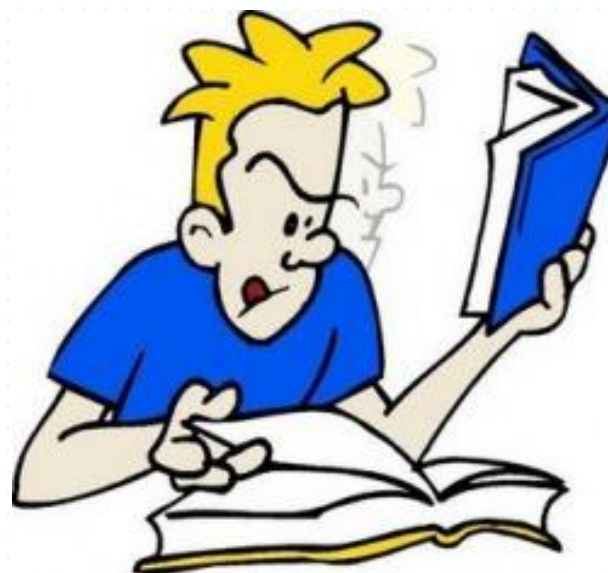
I have been standing in the rain waiting for Tom to turn up for two hours now.

Now you could skip to the last item you have chosen → to be in charge of

The text gives a note at the bottom of the page → to be responsible for

You could ask your students

- the Italian equivalent of the expressions
- their antonyms both in English and Italian
- to take notice of the prepositions



Now that you have finished with the items you have chosen, you can start your work on grammar.

Ask your students to read the passage again and ask them to focus on some items.

The next day the Emperor of Lilliput came to see me again. I **tried to speak** to him in English, but he did not understand me. I tried all the languages I knew, but he **still** did not understand me. He **stayed about two hours**, and then he went away. He left some soldiers in charge of me.

Let' s consider the first item you have chosen.

What do your students know about the verb *To try*?

You should make them notice that this verb can have two sentence structures:

1. *To try* + *-ing form* Ex.: I tried sending her flowers.
2. *To try* + *infinitive* Ex.: I tried to change the wheel of my car but my hands were too cold.

The two sentences are slightly different in meaning:

1. It suggests the idea of making an experiment
2. It suggests the idea of making an effort, but without success.

Now you can ask your class to focus on some verbs which behave in the same way as *to try*: *to mean*, *to forget*, *to remember*,...

The second item gives you the chance to review the translation of Italian *ancora*.

You could ask your student to complete the grid:

<i>Ancora</i>	Example	Rule
<i>Still</i>	Tim is <u>still</u> looking for his keys.	
<i>Yet</i>	I haven' t seen Paul' s new car <u>yet</u> .	
<i>Again</i>	Sorry, it' s broken. Try <u>again</u> later.	
<i>Even</i>	Compared to my house, yours is <u>even</u> bigger.	
<i>More</i>	Can I have some <u>more</u> tea, please?	
<i>Longer</i>	Why don' t you stay here a bit <u>longer</u> ?	

The last item you have chosen is → *stayed about two hours*.

You could make your students notice that

- the verb used is a simple past
- there is the idea of an action developed in a limited arch of time

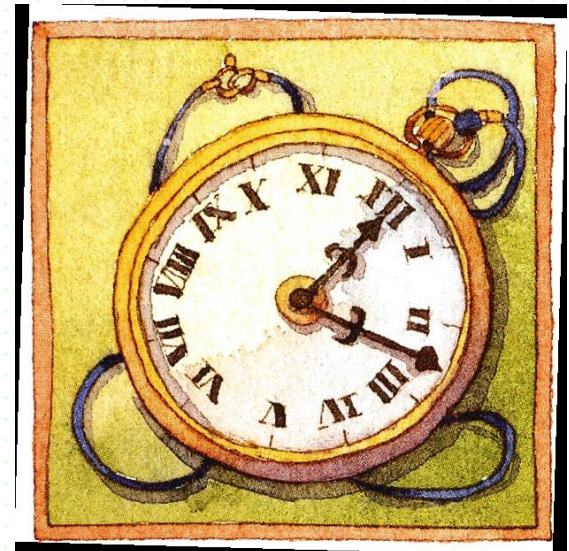
So, why didn't the author use the present perfect and the duration form?

You could take the chance and review both present perfect and duration form.

You could tell your class that

- the action in question is linked to a specific moment in the past
- the action is completely ended
- it is a flashback

What is the tense expressing all these characteristics?



Now that you have done with the items you had chosen, you can start planning a test.

Remember that

- you can test only what you have done during your lessons
- you have to suggest a test you know your class is able to complete
- your students mustn't use the dictionary during the test
- your test may be made up of three different exercises



Exercise 1. Fill in the blanks

You can give your students some sentences and ask them to fill in the blanks with the missing words. These words must be:

- items you have explained during your lessons
- items linked to both grammar and vocabulary
- items related to sentence structure
- items belonging to idiomatic English

This kind of exercise will allow you to know whether your students have

1. paid attention during your lessons
2. studied
3. understood the things you have explained

Exercise 2. Translation

You can give your students some short sentences to translate. These sentences should be structured on

- idiomatic English
- phrasal verbs
- some particular expressions

The translation should be

- from English into Italian
- from Italian into English

This kind of exercise will allow you to know whether your students have

1. got familiar with English sentences
2. studied what you have explained

Exercise 3. Vocabulary building

You can give your students some items and ask them to write

- adjectives
- nouns
- verbs
- synonyms / antonyms

related to them.

This kind of exercise will allow you to know whether your students have

1. understood how to build their own vocabulary
2. studied what you have explained

You can test your students by interviewing them as well. You could ask them

- to read and translate a passage from the book
- to listen to someone reading and then ask them some questions
- to sum up some parts of the story
- to answer to your questions

You could also ask your students to write some short compositions using the items you have explained during your lessons. You could ask them to invent some very short stories which might be

- comic
- romantic
- spy stories
- horror stories
- ...

When giving marks, you have to keep some ideas clear in your mind:

- the starting level of your students
- the quantity of things you have explained and expected them to study
- the difficulty of the material
- the difficulty of the test
- the time you gave them for the test
- the way they tried to solve the problems during the test



Your main objectives in the evaluation of your students' tests should be:

1. correct pronunciation / orthography
2. correct grammar
3. correct way of expressing their ideas (in case of composition, oral test...)
4. the precision of their answers
5. the autonomous way of speaking/writing
6. the ability to understand native speakers (when listening to CD player)

In a few words, you have to be sure they have studied and understood their lessons.