

# Learning with the Irrawaddy, No. 20

To accompany the July 2007 Issue of The Irrawaddy magazine.

Selected article: *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright*, pages 26-27

## TEACHER'S NOTES

Here is the twentieth issue of 'Learning with the Irrawaddy', a monthly educational supplement to the Irrawaddy Magazine. It is designed for reading/writing, English or social studies classes in Post-10 schools and adult education classes on the Burma border. With each issue of Irrawaddy magazine, we select one article and design some learning activities for it.

**NOTE: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO DO ALL OF THE ACTIVITIES LISTED IN THIS MONTH'S EDITION. YOU CAN CHOOSE WHICH ACTIVITIES ARE MOST APPROPRIATE DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH TIME YOU HAVE, AND THE LEVEL ABILITY OF YOUR STUDENTS.**

In this issue we have included:

- ★ this teacher's guide
- ★ some copies of the Irrawaddy magazine
- ★ a class set of photocopies of the article
- ★ a class set of worksheets.

You can teach this to learners with good pre-intermediate or intermediate English.

**For Activities 2 and 12 you need to prepare some resources BEFORE the lesson.**

### A. Activities before reading

#### **Activity 1** Brainstorm

Before you give out copies of the article, write the words *Political prisoners in Burma* on the board. Elicit suggestions from the class about the topic and content of the article. Write everyone's ideas on the board.

Ask learners: What is the difference between a political prisoner and a normal prisoner? Is a political prisoner a criminal? Why/Why not?

Ask learners if they know the names of any famous political prisoners. Write down the names. Do they know why they were put in prison?

Write the name U Win Tin on the board. Ask the students if they know anything about this famous political prisoner. Don't worry if they don't know anything.

## **Activity 2** Running Dictation

Write the following paragraph clearly and accurately on the largest piece of paper that you can find.

*U Win Tin is a \_\_\_\_\_ prisoner. In July 2007, he will have been in prison for \_\_\_\_\_ years. He is \_\_\_\_\_ years old. He is a writer, \_\_\_\_\_ and former leader of the \_\_\_\_\_. In 1989 he was sentenced to 20 years in prison because of his support for \_\_\_\_\_ and his attempts to tell the UN about \_\_\_\_\_ abuses in Burmese prisons. He has been awarded several international prizes for his efforts to defend \_\_\_\_\_.*

Stick this piece of paper on the wall outside of the classroom, but not too far away.

Divide the students into groups of 3-5, depending on the numbers of students in your class. Give each team a name (e.g. A, B, C, etc.). Explain that one student in each team will be the 'writer'. Ask each group to choose who will be their writer. When they have chosen, ask each writer to get a pen and some paper and sit at a desk with their team near them. They should write their team name clearly at the top of the piece of paper they are using. Writers from different teams should NOT sit close to one another (if possible).

The other members of each team should give themselves a number starting from one. So, if there are three other team members (not including the writer), they will have the numbers 'one', 'two' and 'three'.

When you say 'Go!' the number ones from each team run to the piece of paper outside the classroom where the paragraph is written. They memorise as much of the text as possible and then run back and tell the writer of their team what they read. They can only go to the piece of paper ONE TIME during their turn. The writer writes down what they tell him, checking grammar and spelling.

When the writer has finished writing, the number two person on that team runs to the piece of paper and memorises the next part of the text. They also run back and dictate what they can remember to the writer. The game continues with the people on each team running to the piece of paper in turn, memorizing some text, and coming back to dictate it to the writer.

When the writer finishes the paragraph, the team shouts 'Finished!' The team to finish first gets 3 points. Allow the other teams a few minutes to finish.

Then ask each team to swap the paper on which they have written the paragraph with another team. Fetch the original paragraph of text that you stuck up outside the classroom. Elicit the first sentence from one of the groups and write it correctly on the board. Ask each team to mark the text of the other team, checking grammar, spelling and

punctuation mistakes. Continue to elicit each sentence in turn. Finally, ask each team to add up the total number of mistakes for the text they are marking.

Collect the totals for each team, remembering to minus three points for the team that finished the running dictation first. The team with the lowest score wins.

Ask all of the students to copy the text into their books, with the gaps included.

### **Activity 3** Gap-fill

Write the following words and phrases on the board:

*NLD*      *seventy eight*      *freedom of expression*      *human rights*  
*eighteen*      *political*      *journalist*      *democracy*

Put the students into pairs. Ask them to fill in the gaps in the paragraph of text using these words. Give them 10 minutes to complete this task.

Elicit answers from each pair in turn. Check agreement with the rest of the class. If the answer is correct, fill in the blank on the board. Continue until all the blanks have been filled.

The correct answers are shown below:

*U Win Tin is a political prisoner. In July 2007, he will have been in prison for eighteen years. He is seventy eight years old. He is a writer, journalist and former leader of the NLD. In 1989 he was sentenced to 20 years in prison because of his support for democracy and his attempts to tell the UN about human rights abuses in Burmese prisons. He has been awarded several international prizes for his efforts to defend freedom of expression.*

Ask students what they think ‘**freedom of expression**’ means.

## **B. Activities during reading**

### **Activity 4** Match the vocabulary

a) Learners go through the article and underline words they don’t understand. Allow them to use dictionaries if they like, but don’t let them spend too much time on this.

b) Learners match the words and definitions.

Answers:

1. e    2. d    3. h    4. i    5. a    6. g    7. j    8. b    9. c    10. f

### **Activity 5** Gap-fill

Learners fill the gaps with the words from **b**.

**Answers:**

1. *inventive*
2. *existence*
3. *dank*
4. *notorious*
5. *predator*
6. *defiantly*
7. *incarcerated*
8. *docile*
9. *spinal*
10. *treat*

### **Activity 6** Phrases in context

Learners find the example in the article, and identify the best definition or synonym of the underlined phrases.

**Answers:** 1. *b* 2. *c* 3. *d* 4. *a* 5. *b*

### **Activity 7** Comprehension

a) These questions all have one clear answer, easily identifiable from the article.

**Answers:**

1. Win Tin compares himself to a tiger.
2. The author first met Win Tin in cell block 3 of Insein prison.
3. The senior jailer gave him the nickname “Mr Any News.”
4. He washed Win Tin’s blanket.
5. Win Tin eats twice a day – one daily meal and some gruel in the evening.

b) These questions require longer answers, explained in learners’ own words. Check that they understand the main points in these questions and answers.

**Possible answers:**

1. Win Tin compares himself to a tiger (proud jungle predator) because, like a tiger in a zoo, although he is in a cage, his spirit remains unbroken.
2. Win Tin took hairs from the cat and used them to bind a red paste to make crayons.
3. Win Tin was most interested in news and books.
4. Win Tin didn’t want to stay in the hospital because he had nobody to talk to, no news, no reading material, no paper to write – and he missed the singing of political prisoners from neighbouring cells.
5. Win Tin never discussed his personal life and family.
6. His health problems restrict his comfort. He has to wear a neck collar because of spinal problems, and a hernia belt.

### **Activity 8** The difficulties of living in prison in Burma

Put the students into pairs. Give them about 10 minutes to look through the text and identify the difficulties that Win Tin faces in prison.

#### **Possible answers:**

- Health problems
- Isolation and loneliness
- Dirty conditions
- Restricted movements
- Lack of reading and writing materials
- Boredom
- Uncertainty about if/when he will be released
- Little contact with family and friends
- Little news about the outside world
- Limited food
- Cruel treatment by the authorities

Ask students to think about what they would find most difficult in prison, and why.

### **C. Activities after reading**

#### **Activity 9** Prison Diary

This might be a good homework exercise or you could ask students to do it in the class. Perhaps they could do it in pairs. Make sure they understand that the diary is only for ONE day. Prompt ideas by asking them a few questions like,

What is your routine?

What are your living conditions like?

What do you eat?

What are the difficulties of life in prison?

The students can decide how they organize their diary. Encourage them to be imaginative!

#### **Activity 10** Rights of prisoners

Put the students into groups of 3-5, depending on the size of the class.

Give them 10-15 minutes to discuss and write a list of rights that they think prisoners should have in a democratic Burma. You might want to help them by prompting them with categories like:

- *Healthcare*
- *Torture*
- *How long they should spend in prison*
- *Food*
- *Forced labour*
- *Access to education*
- *Access to reading materials*
- *Sanitation*
- *Access to outside spaces and exercise*
- *Overcrowding*

## Activity 11 Play

Put the students into groups of 3-5, depending on the size of the class. The play should be about political prisoners. The students are free to choose the characters and the story, but EVERY student in the group must participate in writing and acting the play.

Give the groups about two hours to write their play. This can be homework time. The play should be about 3-5 minutes long (it doesn't matter if it's a bit longer). You can decide which language they should write it in (if possible this should be their first language, or a language which all the students speak and understand fluently).

After each play has been performed, organize a brief discussion in the class about it. Good questions to ask include: *What was the play about? What messages was it trying to communicate? What did you like about it? Who was your favourite character? Why?*

## Activity 12 Poster

Put students in pairs. Give them a large piece of paper (if you don't have this, ask them to stick small pieces of paper together). Give them one lesson (and perhaps some homework time) to design their poster. It might help them to look at the 'Further Information' section on Page 4 of their worksheets.

Ask each pair in turn to come to the front, show their poster and explain it. After each presentation ask the class if they have any questions about the poster.

Have a vote on which poster is the best (students CANNOT vote for their own poster!). Give winners a small prize if you can find one. Hang the posters around the classroom.

## The Poem

Here is the poem quoted in the article. William Blake is a famous English poet.

### Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright

William Blake (1757 – 1827)

TIGER, tiger, burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art  
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
And when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? What dread grasp  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,  
And water'd heaven with their tears,  
Did He smile His work to see?  
Did He who made the lamb make thee?

Tiger, tiger, burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?