

Learning with The Irrawaddy, No. 26

To accompany the **February 2008** issue of The Irrawaddy magazine.

Selected article: *The Railway Bazaar*, adapted from the online article

TEACHER'S NOTES

Here is the twenty sixth 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 ISSUE. YOU CAN CHOOSE WHICH ACTIVITIES ARE MOST APPROPRIATE DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH TIME YOU HAVE, AND THE LEVEL OF 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.

A. Activities before reading

Activity 1 Who takes the train?

There are no right answers to this exercise, it is provided to help students start thinking about train travel before they begin reading. Let them discuss in pairs, then bring pairs together to share ideas. At the end have a class discussion on who they think takes the train and see if they all agree on the same answers.

Activity 2 Organise the story

Answer

*This morning I woke up at 5.30am, took a shower and left the house.
On my way to the station I stopped at the teashop for some breakfast.
While I was eating I met some friends and we chatted for a while.
Then I paid for my food and walked to the station.
When I arrived it was very busy, I bought my ticket and went to the platform.*

The train was supposed to arrive at 6.30am, but by 6.45am it had not come.
Eventually the train came at 7 am and we left for Rangoon.
On the way the train stopped moving and the driver spent 40 minutes fixing the problem.
I was worried that I would be late if we didn't start moving again soon.
We arrived in Rangoon at 9.25am and I was late for work again!

Activity 3 Train Timetables

Answers

There are 7 trains to Pyinmana everyday, only 5 of these trains go all the way to Mandalay. On Saturday I will take the 5 am train from Rangoon to Mandalay, the train will stop 4 times before arriving in Mandalay. I will arrive in Mandalay at 8.10 pm. The journey will take 15 hours and 10 minutes. My cousin, who lives in Bago, will go to visit his family in Thazi tomorrow. His mother asked him to arrive before 7 pm, so the latest he can leave by train is 7.50 am.

B. Activities during reading

Activity 4 Match the captions

Answers

a) Photo E b) Photo D c) Photo C d) Photo A e) Photo H
f) Photo F g) Photo G h) Photo B

Activity 5 Vocabulary

Answers

a) hiked b) commuter c) consequence d) rickety e) provision
f) inconsistent g) assigned h) plying i) precariously j) hawkers
k) vendors l) high-ranking

Activity 6 Paragraph summaries

Answers

a) Paragraph 6 b) Paragraph 1 c) Paragraph 10 d) Paragraph 7
e) Paragraph 3

When the students have written their summaries of paragraph 5 ask some of the students to come and write their sentences on the board. Ask the class if they can see any grammar or spelling mistakes and make corrections.

Activity 7 Describing pictures

Answers

a) Photo E b) Photo D

Here are some ideas for what could be written in the table

What can you see?	What can you imagine?
<i>A man making tea Washing hanging out to dry Rail tracks A wall Trees More people in the distance</i>	<i>The people in the picture live here They are very poor No trains travel to this part of the tracks The people have no running water</i>

When the students have completed the table, you could elicit ideas and create a class table on the board. After this ask them to write their paragraphs. While they are writing go around the class helping them and correcting mistakes. When they have all finished writing, choose some people who wrote good paragraphs to read them to the class.

C. Activities after reading

Activity 8 Driver's diary

To help the students get started elicit some ideas from the class about a Train driver's working day. Then ask them to write their diary entry for the day.

Possible ideas

*The train driver wakes up very early to go to work
His job is not difficult and he enjoys working
The driver has many friends who live along the train line
The train he drives is always late
He is tired when he gets home from work
He sometimes has problems with passengers begging or taking drugs*

Activity 9 Meeting on the train

If the students are finding it difficult you could give them topics of conversation

Possible ideas

*Talking about family, work or home village
Complaining about the trains
The protests in September
Difficulty of living and working in Rangoon
Romantic – if the conversation is between a boy and a girl!*

Activity 10 Retell the story

Give the students some time to analyse how Mo Aye may have been feeling that day. After ask the class for ideas and create a class table on the board. For each answer given ask why the student thought Mo Aye was feeling good/bad.

After this assign them the task of retelling the story in their own words.

The Railway Bazaar

By Yeni

Rangoon's rickety railways a slice of life

Overcrowded and overheated carriages, backbreaking hard seats and rickety railroad tracks—this is the reality of traveling by train in Burma. Although the government has tried to improve many major lines in the past few years, most remain in poor repair and are not passable during the monsoon season.

1



Photo A

In a 1999 report by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Burma was assigned a “significant role” in the development of a trans-Asia railroad network, linking China, Southeast and South Asia.

2



Photo B

Yet major obstacles remained, the report said. “The speeds of freight trains are heavily restricted on all existing links as a consequence of poor track and bridge conditions. The maximum speed for freight trains has been quoted as 24 km per hour, suggesting that commercial speeds on this section could be as low as 12-14 km per hour.”

3

The report concluded: “Clearly, operation at such low speed levels would be inconsistent with the future provision of an efficient and competitive rail container service.”

4

Burma has a railroad network totaling 3,991 km (2,480 miles) in length, with more than 320 locomotives and 4,000 carriages. The 11 locomotives on Rangoon's own suburban loop line, totaling 45.9 km, call at 39 stations and provide a major commuter service, selling about 150,000 tickets daily.

5

6 The popularity of the Rangoon commuter line leapt when fuel prices were hiked in August, 2007, and rail travel became considerably cheaper than the city bus service.

7 A Rangoon civil servant told *The Irrawaddy* that the cost of his daily journeys to and from work had halved since taking the train.

8 “Before September, only low-paid civil servants, vendors and laborers regularly traveled by train,” he said. “Nowadays you can see even high-ranking officials and businessmen on the train.”

9 Less desirable elements also favor train travel—drug addicts, for instance, who turn the carriages into “shooting galleries” when they reach the relative safety of the outer suburbs.

10 Beggars ride the train, including former servicemen disabled by war. Hawkers clamber precariously from one carriage to another along the connecting links, crossing them like a tightrope before plying their trade with cries of “Snacks, snacks!”



Photo C



Riding the Rangoon commuter train is a good way to see a cross section of Burmese life.

11

Photo D



Photo E



Photo F



Photo G

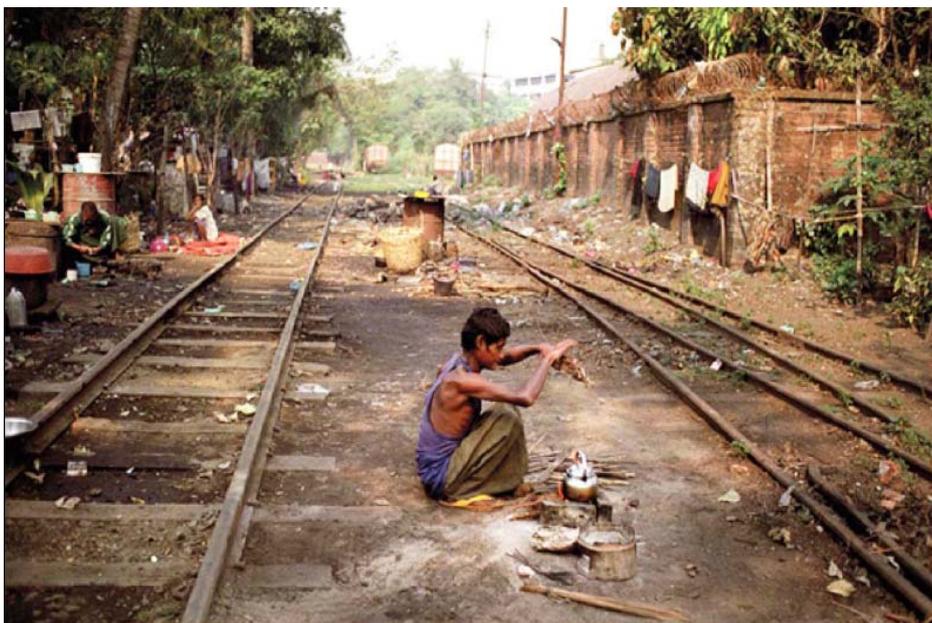


Photo H