

Learning with the Irrawaddy 6

To accompany September 2005 Issue of Irrawaddy Magazine

Teacher's Notes

Here is the sixth issue of 'Learning with the Irrawaddy', a monthly educational supplement to the Irrawaddy Magazine. It is designed for reading, English or social studies classes in Post-10 schools on the Burma border.

With each issue of Irrawaddy magazine, we select one article and design some learning activities for it. We recommend that you use these exercises with students who have an **Intermediate level of English**. You don't need to use all activities suggested here – choose those that are most appropriate for your students.

In this issue we have included:

- this teacher's guide
- An original copy of Irrawaddy magazine
- a class set of photocopies of the article
- a class set of worksheets.

Selected article: *Asia's Backyard Fence Border*, pages 14-19

Activities to do before reading

Activity 1

Prediction: Title and description

- a) Look at the title of the article: *Asia's Backyard Fence Border*.
Check that students understand the work *Backyard* (area at the back of a compound).
Based on this title, what do students think will be in the article?
Which part of Asia do they think the article is about?
- b) This is a *photo essay*. What do students think a photo essay is?
Elicit students' ideas.

Answer:

An essay is a piece of factual – usually descriptive or persuasive - writing. A photo essay describes or persuades, but uses photos instead of words.

Activity 2

Prediction: True or False?

- a) Students read the sentences, and decide whether they are true or false.
1. Police on the China-Burma border try hard to catch drugs traffickers.
 2. There is a lot of corruption on the China-Burma border.
 3. People can make a lot of money from drugs on the China-Burma border.
 4. Over 10,000 Burmese women work as prostitutes in Ruili and Jiegong.
 5. Most of the prostitutes' customers are from Western countries.
 6. There is a high rate of HIV infection on the China-Burma border.
- b) After students have done activity 2, give them the article.
Students read the article, and check their predictions.

Answers:

1. *False*
2. *True*
3. *True*
4. *False – 100 in Ruili, about 100 in Jiegong.*
5. *False – they are from China and Burma.*
6. *True*

Activities to do during reading

Activity 3

Paragraph Summaries

There are four paragraphs of text. Which ideas are expressed in which paragraph? Students match the sentence with the paragraph the information appears in.

1. There are a lot of Burmese women working as prostitutes in the border towns.
2. The prostitutes' customers are mostly from Burma and China.
3. The Chinese authorities are not trying very hard to stop drug smuggling.
4. The police do not watch very hard for drug smugglers.
5. Heroin addicts inject heroin on the streets of Ruili.
6. Many truck drivers spread HIV infection.
7. There is a lot of corruption, because it is so easy to make a lot of money.
8. Drug smugglers can easily travel from Burma into China.
9. The HIV infection rate is very high in this area.
10. Drugs and prostitution are the main goods and services in this area.

Answers:

Paragraph 1 – 4, 8

Paragraph 2 – 3, 7

Paragraph 3 – 1, 5, 10

Paragraph 4 – 2, 6, 9

Activity 4

Vocabulary from Context

- a) Students find these words in the text. Don't let them use a dictionary! They look at the context, and try to guess the meanings.

parasol	contraband	frontier	haphazard	rife	commodities
sidewalk	estimated	brothel	hovel	lethal	freight

- b) Students match the words with these synonyms and definitions.

goods smuggled across borders
everywhere
umbrella
building where prostitutes work
probable
border
goods being transported
deadly
very small, dirty house
goods and services
disorganized
pavement

Answers:

parasol – umbrella
contraband – goods smuggled across borders
frontier – border
haphazard – disorganized
rife – everywhere
commodities – goods and services
sidewalk – pavement
estimated – probable
brothel – building where prostitutes work
hovel – very small, dirty house
lethal – deadly
freight – goods being transported

Activity 5

Descriptions of Photos

- a) There are 14 photos in the photo essay. Here are descriptions of three of them. Students match the photos with the descriptions.
- a. *Three women are sitting on the pavement. They are on a busy street – there are cars driving past them, and people doing their shopping. There are trees planted along the pavement. The women look bored.*
 - b. *A man is working with a small rock. He is concentrating quite hard. He is holding a long, thin tool, and there are many other tools laid out on a cloth in front of him. He's wearing a white vest, and a longyi.*
 - c. *A woman is walking onto a road, carrying a medium-sized box in each hand. She has just come through a gap in a fence – the fence is made of bamboo which is broken in places, and surrounded by bushes. There are some buildings behind the fence.*

Answers:

a – 14
b – 9
c – 2

- b) Individually or in pairs, students choose another photograph and write a description of it.
They read their descriptions to the class.
The class identifies which picture is being described.
You could do this as a quiz, and get students to silently write down the number of each picture being described, and give the answers at the end.

Activity 6**Inferring**

Which of these statements can students infer from the article and photos?
Inferring is to form opinions and ideas based on information. With this exercise, students judge whether there is enough information in the text and photos to form the ideas expressed in the sentences.

1. The Chinese government is not interested in stopping drug trafficking.
2. It is easy to smuggle drugs from Burma to China.
3. People use drugs openly in the Chinese border towns.
4. Many Chinese people like to use heroin.
5. People are making a lot of money from drugs.
6. Prostitutes can make a lot of money in China.

Answers:

1. *No. It says in the text that some Chinese police and authorities try a little. Also there is a photo of Chinese police searching a car for drugs. Also, this article focuses only on one area in China, it doesn't say anything about the central government policies.*
2. *Yes. The text describes how smugglers bring drugs across the border, very near to police checkpoints. There are photos to support this.*
3. *Yes. There are many photos of people using drugs in the streets.*
4. *No. The article does not mention how many Chinese people use heroin.*
5. *Yes. The article says that profits from the narcotics trade are high.*
6. *No. The article doesn't say how much prostitutes earn from their work.*

Activity 7**Identify the main point**

a) What do students think is the main point of this article and photo-essay?

1. The China-Burma border has a lot of drug smuggling and prostitution.
2. Chinese police are not very effective against drug smugglers.
3. Many Burmese women become prostitutes because of poverty.
4. There are a lot of trucks travelling between Burma and China.

Answer: 1.

b) Students look at the options above, and decide which option is the main point, and which points are:

- *supporting points?*
- *not a point of the photo-essay?*

Answers: *supporting points – 2 4 not a point of the article – 3*

Activities to do after reading

Activity 8

Behind the Picture

- a) Here are some stories – these are not true stories, they are made up - giving background information about the people and situations in three of these photos. Students identify which photos the stories are about.
- a. *This couple are visiting their relatives, in a nearby town. They are very annoyed, as they are in a hurry. They have never used or carried drugs, and they don't want to waste time while the police check their car. They tried to persuade the police to not search them, but the police have their orders, so they have to wait around while their car is searched. Then they can continue their journey.*
 - b. *She manages a brothel. She really hates her job – the customers are rude and unpleasant, and many of the women who work for her are very unhappy. She also has to work very long hour, often all night. Three times a day, she smokes Ya Ba. It helps her to stay awake, and helps her forget her horrible job.*
 - c. *It is very hard work for these men. They are very, very tired when they finish for the day. They work in groups – about six men, mostly young men as the work is so hard. Most of them have families back home in Burma who need the money. They can't get good work in Burma, so they have come to China to support their families.*

Answers:

- a – 5
b – 10
c – 7

- b) Individually or in pairs, students choose another photograph and write some background information about it. Encourage creativity!
They read their descriptions to the class.
The class identifies which picture the story is about.
You could do this as a quiz, and get students to silently write down the number of each picture being described, and give the answers at the end.

Activity 9

Discussion

Talk about these points with your students:

- Do you think Ruili is a good place to live? How do you think it compares to the Thai-Burma border?
- If you lived in Ruili, how would you try to solve its problems?