

The Curriculum Project

Learning with The Irrawaddy, No. 44

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Selected article: **Kyaw Thu: A Well of Compassion**

TEACHER'S NOTES

Here is the forty-fourth issue of Learning with The Irrawaddy, a monthly educational supplement to The Irrawaddy magazine. It is designed for English or social studies classes in Post-10 schools and adult education classes on the Burma border. With each issue of The Irrawaddy, we select one article and design some learning activities for it. You can teach this to learners with at least **good intermediate English**.

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, your interests, and the ability of your students.

A. Activities before reading

1. Celebrity to Activist

Here the students should be thinking about Burmese as well as foreign celebrities. Particularly good examples could be Bono (lead singer from U2 – regularly leads efforts for the developing world e.g. cancelling debt), Bill Gates (billionaire founder of Microsoft - gives millions to health programmes in Africa), Angelina Jolie (actress - works with UNHCR), George Clooney (actor – raises money for disaster relief), and Zarganar (a popular Burmese comedian – led aid efforts after Cyclone Nargis – currently a political prisoner).

2. Guess the Questions

After reading the introduction to the interview, your students brainstorm questions for Kyaw Thu. There are no right or wrong answers here.

3. Vocabulary

Answers:

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

4. Grammar Review – Present Perfect

Answers: (note: students can change the verb tense from present perfect to past simple)

1. *haven't* > *hasn't* 2. *last year* or *hasn't done* > *didn't do* 3. *a few days ago* or *have gone* > *went* 4. *correct* 5. *came* > *come*

5. Guess the Activity

Here the students continue their grammar practice. First put the students in pairs and have them prepare their 5 sentences. Make sure the students are using the present perfect. As the students do this, monitor them and check for mistakes. Then group pairs together; they take turns miming their actions. Have the students say what they think the action is to the other group.

B. Activities during reading

6. Match the Questions and Answers

Get students into pairs and give them one answer to read. While they are reading, post the interviewer's questions around the classroom on the walls. Then the students go and stand next to the question that matches their answer.

7. Vocabulary

Now hand out the entire article to the students and as they read it, have them identify those words.

Answers:

containers, jars, buckets, ponds

(Note: "wells" is not completely correct since it is not used to store or put water in, but rather only to take water out. However, it is arguably a natural storage system.)

8. Comprehension

Answers:

1. *they've dried up/become empty (or similar answer)*

2. *put their flags on their trucks*

3. *no*

4. *local water donors, volunteers, his wife, colleagues*

5. *No, he doesn't have the capacity and he sees it as the government's responsibility*

9. Analysis

Answers:

The answers will be different, but some of the main ideas include:

a. *No, the rains haven't been enough to fill the ponds/wells*

b. *His funeral service is busier since more people are dying; normal numbers are 40-50 funerals but now there are 80*

c. *(any two of these) government/political problems, not having enough water donors, salty groundwater*

d. *he has put strict regulations in place to stop the misuse of money and supplies*

e. *so that people think they are helping and get support from the people.*

C. Activities after reading

10. Interview Skills and Sympathising

For this exercise you will need small slips of scrap paper. Give each student one slip and have them each write a question. Monitor the students as they write to check for accuracy and to ensure the students are not writing over simplistic questions (e.g. What is your name? or Where do you live?). When all the students have finished explain the next steps to them. You may wish to model this with a student first. Encourage the students to make their responses creative and suitable for the situation.

Example: Student A: How far have you walked today?

Student B: I have walked 5 kilometers here to get water.

11. Conserving Water

Put the students into groups and have them create their list of five things. First, you may need to clarify what waste means: *waste (v) – to use inefficiently or without thinking*

Then they identify ways people in their community waste water. After this they can try and discuss solutions.

Once the groups have created their list of 5 solutions, put the students into new groups and have them decide on the best 5 solutions from all those they made in their original group.

12. Free Water Debate

Divide the class into groups of four or five. Then the students discuss how much they or their family pay for water (for drinking as well as cleaning and farming). Then on the board list the following average prices for water that people pay around the world (per 100 gallons):

Ireland - \$0.00; Spain - \$0.62; Malaysia - \$0.09; Australia - \$1.61; USA - \$0.80; Pakistan - \$0.01

Ask them to discuss why there is a cost for water and what is the money for?

Then assign groups a “for” or “against” position on the statement. Then, each student prepares one point that supports their position.

When they are ready, have a group for free water line up facing a group against. The students take turns sharing their points. The best group can be decided after all the groups have finished by the groups watching the debate or by the teacher.