

Language

Travel writing

Learning objectives

- The students read extracts from a travel diary describing a journey across Borneo.
- In the project stage, students write a story describing one of their own travel experiences.

Warmer

1 Put students into pairs and give them two minutes to make a list of different types of book. Ask how many each pair has on their list and get the pair with the longest list to read it out loud. For example, *novels, travel, history, sport, reference*.

2 Put students into pairs to discuss these questions:
Do you enjoy reading nonfiction books? Have you ever read a travel book? How do you find out about places you're going to visit?

1 Check students understand the words in the box by asking them to choose five words and writing definitions for them. They should then read their definitions out loud to a partner, who should try to guess which word is being defined. Tell students to read the three extracts and match the topics in the box to an extract.

Answers

- A – city life, clothes, traffic
B – jungle, insects, sleeping
C – hiking, waterfall, climbing, jungle

2 Ask students to read the texts again to find answers to the questions. Explain that some of the questions are not directly answered in the texts and that they will need to infer the answers from clues. Allow students to compare their answers with a partner before checking as a class. Nominate different pairs to answer each question.


Fast finishers

Ask fast finishers to write a question about one of the texts. They should give their question to another fast finisher who should try to answer it. After checking answers to exercise 2, elicit these questions for the rest of the class to answer.

Answers

- 1 nervous, excited
- 2 Because they are on the opposite side to which she is used to.
- 3 Mixed. She was hoping for a nice hotel, but thought the tree house was cool.
- 4 Probably not. She seems excited about being in a real tree house.
- 5 *amazing, great, awesome*
- 6 The waterfall was probably more appealing after a long, hot trek.

3 Put students into pairs to discuss the questions. Model the activity by working through questions 3 and 4 with a strong student. When eliciting responses, encourage them to give reasons for their answers. You could hold a class vote on who would like to travel to an unusual place and then find out why. Has anyone visited a place like those mentioned in the texts? If so, ask them to share their experience with the class.

4  **1.25** Tell students that they are going to listen to a class discussion about travel writing. Go through the pronunciation of the names (Fiona /fi:'əʊ.nə/) and give them a few minutes to read the tips. Check understanding by asking students to give you an example for each question. Play the recording. Allow students to compare their answers with a partner before checking as a class.

Extension activity

Ask students to brainstorm language related to tips a and b. Elicit different ways of describing sounds or smells, e.g. *disgusting, foul, perfumed* and different ways of moving, e.g. *crawl, stroll*. Give students a few minutes for this and then put them into pairs. They should swap lists with their partner and try to write a short description of a place they know well using the words on their partner's list. Nominate one or two pairs to read their descriptions out loud to the class.

Answers

- 1 c 2 e 3 a 4 b 5 f 6 d

Audioscript

- Teacher:** OK, everyone, let's get started please. Has everyone done the homework and read the article about travel writing? Well, if you haven't, then make sure you do so for tomorrow. Right then. Can someone tell me one characteristic of personal travel stories? Amy?
- Amy:** Um, well, they're usually written in the first person, I think.

Teacher: Yes, that's right. So you'll read things like 'I was sitting in the taxi', or 'We went swimming', for example. And how does this affect the story, Amy?

Amy: Well, it makes things feel more personal, I think. Like they're happening to a real person, who's talking to you about their experiences.

Teacher: Yes, that's a good way to describe it. It makes the story feel more authentic, and more immediate. What other things do travel writers do, in order to make their story feel more real? Harry?

Harry: They usually describe things that happen in lots of detail. It's like they're painting a picture for you, or describing a movie scene, so you can see everything in your head.

Teacher: Good, and what type of language do they often use? Typical, everyday words and expressions, or maybe something else, something a bit different? Fiona?

Fiona: They might use a lot of creative language, and more interesting words, to describe things in an unusual way. You know, to make things more exciting, or special somehow?

Teacher: Yes, that's true. Not all the time, some travel writers use everyday language, but others really try to paint a detailed picture, like Harry said, and they might use more exciting or dramatic words, like 'enormous' or 'freezing' or 'awesome'. And what about the author's feelings? How do they usually express them? Thomas?

Thomas: They can talk about sensations, things they notice with their senses. So, they talk about what they see or hear. Or what they feel, smell and taste.

Teacher: Yes, they do. In a longer story, the author will probably mention all five of those senses, as well as their emotions – if they feel happy or sad, excited or nervous. And what else? What other information can they give us? Yes, Jenny?

Jenny: Their opinions? I mean, what they think about the places and people they see? So they tell you if a place is ugly, or boring, in their opinion, or maybe they think it's really beautiful or exciting. Right?


Teacher: Yes, some travel writers give their opinions very clearly and directly. They might say, 'I think' or 'I thought' if they're writing in the past tense. Other writers might not use those exact words, and they may not express their opinions that directly, but they might use positive or negative adjectives to describe something, and that shows us what they really think ... what their real opinion might be. And what about giving us facts? Paul?

Paul: Well, it depends, but some writers give lots of facts about the places they visit, like the history of a city, when something was built, or maybe the local geography, the weather, things like that.

Teacher: Right. Or they might describe the local culture, the way people dress there, the things that they eat, or how they act. That's all part of describing their experiences. This information, or context, helps the reader understand more about the place and its people. For example, if the traveller visits a famous building, they might include information about when it was built, or about interesting events that people celebrate there now.

Paul: So, it's like the writer is a tour guide, right?

Teacher: Yes, that's a good way to say it, Paul. Travel writers want to 'take readers on a trip' with them, so they often write the way that a tour guide might speak a tour. Excellent. Does anyone have any questions before we revise the texts that you read for homework? OK, then. Let's start with the first extract from the book, *We're doing WHAT for summer vacation?* by Cindy Davis and Ali Rollasen ...

- 5**  **1.25** Play the recording again. Put students into small groups and monitor as they discuss the questions. Encourage them to give reasons. Then hold a class vote to find out the most popular type of travel story.

Possible answers

- 1** It makes it feel personal and as if it's happening to a real person.
2 and 3 Students' own answers.

- 6** Tell students to read the text again and to highlight examples of the tips. Allow them to compare their answers with a partner before checking as a class.

Mixed ability

Put weaker students into pairs. Each student should check the texts for three tips each and then share their findings with their partner. Stronger students can complete the exercise individually.

Answers

Text A Tips a, b, c, d, e and f
Text B Tips b, c and f
Text C Tips a, b, c, e and f

Cooler

Look on a video-hosting site such as YouTube for a short travel clip presented by Michael Palin. After watching for a few minutes, ask students to write down things they would like to know about the place featured. They could then watch the whole episode at home and report back in the following class about what they saw.

Project

To help generate ideas, put students into small groups to think about and discuss the questions. After they have written their stories, tell them to post them around the room and to then try to read as many as possible in a given time limit. Ask students to choose their favourite story, and nominate one or two individuals to explain which story they chose and why. Stories could be posted on the class blog, if you have one.