

Sample activity using a literary dialogue (from Jones & Oakey, 2019, p. 134)

In order to use literary dialogues, teachers can explore the CLiC web app to look for dialogues on the basis that they are likely to engage a particular group of learners, rather than because they contain certain forms. The following shows a sample activity from Conan Doyle, A (1902.) *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Chapter 2. [Extract from CLiC \(2019\).](#)

'I have in my pocket a manuscript,' said Dr. James Mortimer.

'I observed it as you entered the room,' said Holmes.

'It is an old manuscript.'

'Early eighteenth century, unless it is a forgery.'

'How can you say that, sir?'

'You have presented an inch or two of it to my examination all the time that you have been talking. It would be a poor expert who could not give the date of a document within a decade or so. You may possibly have read my little monograph upon the subject. I put that at 1730.'

'The exact date is 1742.' Dr. Mortimer drew it from his breast-pocket. 'This family paper was committed to my care by Sir Charles Baskerville, whose sudden and tragic death some three months ago created so much excitement in Devonshire. I may say that I was his personal friend as well as his medical attendant. He was a strong-minded man, sir, shrewd, practical, and as unimaginative as I am myself. Yet he took this document very seriously, and his mind was prepared for just such an end as did eventually overtake him.'

Access:

1. How good are you remembering details when they see things.
2. Play 'Kim's game' in groups. Present students with a tray of objects for a few seconds and then cover it. Groups compete to remember the most objects and where they were placed.
3. Ask students to recall what they know about Sherlock Holmes' character e.g. he is clever/a good observer/he remembers things. Explain that you will be looking at a short dialogue which shows this.

Activity:

4. Give students the dialogue above to read. As they read, ask them to 'picture' the scene i.e. the room, the people in etc. They then describe that to each other and note differences.
5. Ask students some simple comprehension questions: what does Sherlock notice here? How? Why is Mortimer surprised?
6. What do you think is written on the document? Why do you think this might be important for the story? What do you think will happen next?
These are obviously open questions with no set answers.

Awareness:

7. Underline all the examples of 'it' and 'that' in the conversation. When are they used to refer back to things already mentioned? What do they refer to? Do you use these items in the same way when you speak?
8. Underline the phrases which means 'I do not understand how you know that' (How can you say that?). When we use this phrase how do we normally feel (surprised or annoyed). Think of a situation where you might say this to someone. Do you have a similar expression in your first language? What is another way to say this? (How do you know that?)

You can adapt this activity for teaching.

Citation:

Jones, C., & Oakey, D. (2019). Literary dialogues as models of conversation in English language teaching. *Journal of Second Language Teaching and Research*, 7(1), 108-135.

Also see this guest post on the CLiC Fiction Blog:

Jones, C. (2019). Conversations in the CLiC corpora: Exploring their potential as models for dialogue in ELT [Blog post]. CLiC Fiction Blog, University of Birmingham. Retrieved from <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/clic-dickens/2019/09/06/conversations-in-the-clic-corpora-exploring-their-potential-as-models-for-dialogue-in-elt>