

## Bronze and Sunflower: Ideas for Activities

These lesson activities and ideas have been created with flexibility in mind. The Chinese script is quite high level, so as the class teacher you will have to decide what is appropriate for your pupil's level. When using authentic materials you should consider:

- 1) Do I need to grade the language (i.e. re-write / simplify the text)?
- 2) Should I use a shorter excerpt?
- 3) Should I start with the English version, then move to Chinese? Or vice-versa (and how does this affect the way the activities run)?

### Lead In Idea:

Show students the cover of the book (alternatively, find a photo or video of a rural Chinese scene with similar children). Ask- what can you see? Who are the people?

Put new vocabulary on the board (buffalo/ goose/ reeds etc)

Ask further questions about the two characters- What do you think they are like? give me some adjectives (in English is fine)- put on board- get students to translate using dictionaries.

Develop a picture with your class as to who the children are, where they live, what kind of personalities they have- building in vocabulary they will need from the excerpt.

(as an extension, you can also ask students to develop a list of questions that they need answering by reading the script, e.g.

- 1) Who is older?
- 2) Where do they live?
- 3) Do they go to school?
- 4) What do they do in their free time?

They could complete a chart\*:

Things I/ we know	Things I/we are not sure of	Things I/we would like to know

Students then read, or read and listen to the excerpt and complete the chart.

### True/ False/ Probable

Alternatively, you can prepare a list of true/ false/ probable statements that students have to work out from the excerpt (e.g. Sunflower is older; they live in a city; Bronze doesn't go to school)

### **Reading Activities: Intensive reading**

Obviously Bronze and Sunflower could be used as a broader curriculum aim of extensive reading across the course of a term or year, where you encourage your pupils to develop their reading skills through a choice of books. However, these suggestions focus on an intensive reading approach, using the excerpts provided.

### **Dealing with new vocabulary**

This excerpt is full of vocabulary that your students probably won't know. Therefore, you have some obvious choices (but can choose other methods):

- 1) Simplify the language for them (i.e. grade the text accordingly)**
- 2) Encourage reading for general meaning, and select only key vocabulary**
- 3) Work with specified vocabulary**

#### **1) Simplify the language for them (i.e. grade the text accordingly)**

Obviously this is a task for the teacher to carry out before the lesson, where you closely read the text, and remove/ rewrite any vocabulary that you think will be too challenging (it is important to leave a certain level of challenge however).

#### **2) Encourage reading for general meaning, and select only key vocabulary**

This option encourages the idea that pupils can read a text and understand it, without having to understand every single word- particularly useful if you are encouraging students to develop extensive reading.

One approach could be to ask your students to read the text (or a chunk of the text) individually, and choose 3-5 words they don't know (this can also be set as a pre-task for homework). They then compare lists with a partner- does their partner know the word? In pairs they have to reduce the list to 3-5 words again.

Two pairs join to make a group of four- same process. Eventually, the class has to decide on a list of 8-10 words maximum for the teacher to explain, or to look up for homework. Alternatively, the pairs/ groups can look up the new words, and then explain to the rest of the class. Finally, they can actively use the new vocabulary by creating new sentences to use the word.

#### **3) Work with specified vocabulary**

Students can find and categorise words, for example in nature (e.g. 太阳), animal (e.g. 牛, 鸭子), verb (吃, 写), adj (美丽, 聪明). For higher levels you can ask students to find according to category (e.g. one group can find all verbs, or all animals) within the text, for lower levels you can list all the key words and students can either categorise as above, or find them from the transcript.

To develop writing, they can then use the words to put together a simplified version of the part of the story.

### **Working with style and grammar:**

**Cutting up the text/ jigsaw reading-** give students copies of the extract (Chinese or English accordingly to level), cut up in different chunks. Ask them to work out the order the chunks should go in- this makes students focus on the language and grammar used, as they have to look for “clues” in sentences to understand the flow of the text.

For higher level classes, this task can be done in small groups, giving each group a “chunk” or paragraph of the Chinese script to translate- then they have to work with the other groups to piece it all together, and perhaps explain the vocabulary of their chunk to each other.

Of course, to focus on specific grammar/ language, you can always use a cloze/ gap-fill example, taking out the vocabulary that you wish to focus on (perhaps the list used in the exercise above). Students are then given the vocabulary and asked to put back in the correct place.

### **Listening**

Lead-in- as for reading.

If working with the Chinese listening, it is worth noting that it is quite long (around 5 minutes), so for lower-level learners, it is advisable to select a smaller part of the script, or editing it – for example you could use from “从此以后，青铜将跟着葵花，将她所认识的字...” to the end, and focus on Bronze’s eagerness to learn, and the vocabulary he learns. Alternatively, you can also record your own simplified version of the text.

### **Using Images to aid listening**

You can draw a set of pictures from the story excerpt- eg:

- A) Sunflower pointing to the setting sun
- B) The moon rising
- C) Bronze pointing to the moon
- D) Mama calling
- E) Bronze writing out 牛吃草
- F) Sunflower giving Bronze a stick

Students use the images to predict:

- 1) What happens in the excerpt
- 2) What order things will happen in the excerpt

As students listen, they have to put the pictures in the correct order. (A simpler version for lower-level students; give them the pictures of the animals mentioned, and ask them to put them in the order that they are mentioned- listen and check again).

This is a particularly good exercise if you want students to focus on language of prediction, or sequencing. Remember, your language aims can be different from the text itself, depending on the tasks you select for your students.

As an extension, they have to retell the story excerpt in their own words (in Chinese).

### **Listening for specific words or phrases**

As a slightly more fun alternative to a typical cloze/ gap fill listening exercise, you can give your students a specific word or phrase each/ in pairs to listen out for; in this group of words some will be in the text, some will not. You can make this a team game, and give each team a list of words/ phrases- they then have to select in their team who listens for what word, and also check the meaning of the word (obviously you can choose if you wish to focus on a particular lexical group or grammar point).

Students stand up- when they think they have heard their word/ phrase, they sit down. Teacher awards points if they are correct.

As an extension, they can produce the word again with correct pronunciation and tone, and perhaps put into a sentence, for more points.

### **Extension Ideas**

Read and discuss the paragraph beginning with 从此以后. Then ask your pupils to imagine Sunflower and Bronze in a different environment, what words do you think they are going to practise? E.g. they are now in a city, they will see a train, bus etc., or during Chinese New Year, they will see firecrackers, red clothes etc... From this vocabulary, they can produce their own story using the same style.

Perhaps set them a challenge- if they had to teach someone (maybe a friend or family member) ten key words for their own environment, what would they be? How would they teach them? (Perhaps they can do this for homework and report back how successful/ unsuccessful it was- did their parents/ friends understand them?).

Ask students to discuss what happens once Bronze starts to learn to read and write- how does this change him? What happens later in the book? Can they write a page of what they think happens next? Or perhaps, in 15 years' time, when they are adults- where do they live, what do they do, do they still know each other?

Could they write out this scene/these scenes, and act it out/ make an imovie (with subtitles)?

\*With acknowledgement to Jeremy Harmer