

The Landlady

Roald Dahl

Introduction



The Project. The BritLit project was started in 2002 with the intention of providing Portuguese teachers of English in the state sector additional resource material for the extensive reading requirements of years 10 and 11. Since then, the project has spread internationally and new 'kits' are being produced across the globe by teachers from many nations.

The Resource Kits. The kits are not intended as a complete set of course material to be worked through, rather as source material to be dipped into, expanded and contracted as required. Much of the material provided is intended to be used with mixed ability classes and while the input from the materials is the same, the output from the students will vary considerably. Other materials are generally classed according to their degree of difficulty using the ALTE levels now adopted by many European countries through the Council of Europe as benchmark criteria for language assessment. (http://www.alte.org/can_do/cef.cfm). The resource kits provide a never-ending source of material for the teacher inasmuch as teachers are asked to contribute their own experiences and ideas to the project; we would like to see the materials mutate and mature with use. One of the advantages of using an electronic form is that each section can easily be personalised; we would be interested to see examples of this approach.

We strongly advise that the section 'Characterisation' is attempted before the students are asked to read the story. This section includes preparatory material including familiarisation with some key sections of the text.

Summary of the story. Billy Weaver, a young man visiting the City of Bath for the first time, is looking for accommodation. He is inexplicably drawn to a house where the landlady seems to be expecting him. The house and the landlady seem friendly and welcoming, and he looks forward to staying there. Signing the guest book, two names disturb him. Where has he heard them before? Why aren't there any other guests? What actually happens is left very much up to the reader, but Roald Dahl, the master of this kind of story, gives us all the clues we need to concoct a grisly ending.

This Resource Kit: The resources provided for the teacher are designed to introduce the student to the background of the story before they even look at a page of the book. Extracts from the story are used to provide context for certain aspects to enhance understanding. One result of this technique is that whole chunks of the text will therefore be familiar to the student before they start to read the complete story.

The material is divided into four sections: **Pre-reading - Characterisation, Context, Word Work** and **After Reading**

- 'Characterisation' examines who Billy and the landlady are and asks the students to speculate on what they might look like.
- 'Context' looks at some of the issues that can be explored from the story: the year in which it was set (1959?), embalming, witches and a look at some famous poisoners!
- 'Word Work' takes some aspects of language in use from the text - the use of reflexive pronouns and ways of comparing and offers some practice work for the student. There is also a 'glossary' of words and phrases used in the story.
- 'After Reading' checks students understanding of the story, and also leads them into another source of literature. In this case, the theme of "the Landlady" is explored by Bill Bryson in an extract from his best-selling 'Notes from a Small Island'. **Teachers are advised that they may find that some language in the original text is not easy to handle in the classroom and we suggest that they use their discretion and electronic editing skills accordingly.**

Ideas for project work and homework are presented throughout the worksheets.

The teacher should decide how much, or how little of the material they want to use in class or as homework. If all the materials are used then this would take in the region of eight hours of combined class work and homework. Teachers are advised that the BritLit 'Index' project (with links from the Teaching English webpage) can assist teachers in finding suitable material by thematic interest.

Additional background material and language work can be obtained by accessing the internet links provided.

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Fitch O'Connell
Porto, Portugal
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Contents

Section	Contexts	ALTE Level
Characterisation	Pre-reading	A2/B2
	Billy Weaver	B1/2
	The Landlady	B2
Context	1959 (Portugal & generic versions)	A2/B2
	Famous Poisoners	B1
	Taxidermy	B1/2
	Embalming	A2/B1
	Witches	B2
Word Work	Reflexive pronouns	B1/2
	Comparatives	B1/2
	Glossary - English	B2
	Glossary - Portuguese	A2
After Reading	Comprehension check	B1
	Bill Bryson – from 'Notes from a Small Island'	B2
Supplementary	Internet links for exploration	