

ANSWERS – TEXT 1

1. Comment on the political panorama of the time in Ireland. How can students be best introduced to this type of content? Propose concrete activities.

The story of the novel takes place during 1930s and 1940s. One of the most significant event in the 20th was the signing of the enactment of the Anglo-Irish treaty on December 6, 1921. Ireland was to be known as the “Irish Free state” although it would have the status of dominion. The new stated comprised only 26 of the 32 countries, the northeastern area, known as Northern Ireland, remaining separate.

However, the term of the treaty led to a civil war in Southern Ireland between the government and the extremist Republicans, commanded by Michael Collins, who did not accept the partition of Ireland. The death of the latter and the victory of the formers led to the election of a new president Williams Thomas Cosgrave on September, 1992.

In 1937 a new Irish Constitution ended the power of the Crown and the Irish Free State was replaced for Eire (Ireland). In 1949 Ireland declared its independence becoming the Republic of Ireland and withdrawing from the British Commonweathl.

The political history of Ireland can be taught to our students from a diachronic perspective. Firstly, we can use texts and maps to show the beginning of English dominance and the Irish resistance, e.g. the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, the Rebellion of 1798, the successive risings of the 19th century etc. We can also assign group-work tasks, for instance, one group collects data about important figures in the history of Ireland, such as Arthur Griffith, the founder of the Sinn Fein (“We Ourselves”), John Redmond and the Home Rule Movement, Eamon de Valera, Michael Collins, etc. and elaborates posters with photographs and some autobiographical information. Another group searches for information about important events such as the Easter Rising and the Irish Civil War. They may make use of famous films which show part of the Irish fight for independence e.g. Michael Collins. In addition, a more up-to-date panorama of Ireland is provided in the films In the Name of the Father and Some Mother’s Son, both dealing with the I.R.A.

To round this topic off we will conduct a debate for students to launch their ideas and conclusions about what they have learnt.

2. Explain the role that women played in Irish society of the time. What kind of crosscurricular theme could be dealt with in relation to this?

We could deal with the question of the role of women in Irish society seeing it as the crosscurricular theme of education for the equality of sexes.

Ireland is a country of tradition and the traditional position of woman in that society has not been easy to overcome. The reasons for this can be found in the influence of the Roman Catholic religion, the absence of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, neutrality in the two World Wars (stagnant job market) and geographical isolation for the arrival of new cultural trends. The Church advocated the centrality of marriage and the family, the evils of all sexual activity not aimed at procreation, and held up the Virgin Mary as the model for all women. Furthermore, in most countries the religious head of the household is the man. In Ireland, to this day, it is generally the woman. Women in post-famine period were offered the role of bringing up children in the Catholic faith. This excluded them from any economic activity and therefore from equal participation in many spheres of life.

The treatment of equality of sexes should be done on two levels. First, in the equal attention given to students in class, equal and non-stereotyped distribution of roles and, second, by means of reflection on the issue using texts, films, graphic material as a starting point. Students should reach conclusions themselves and we have to remember that changes do not take place overnight when deeply rooted attitudes have to be changed. The solution to this is constancy and making use of any opportunity to handle the issue.

3. Comment on multi-word verbs in the text. What types of exercises can students do to learn them?

In present-day English is very usual to place prepositions or adverbs after certain verbs so as to obtain a variety of meanings. These verbs are called multi-word verbs and they can be prepositional or phrasal depending on the position of the particle — compulsory after the

verb in prepositional verbs and optional in phrasal verbs, that is, they can be intransitive or transitive and if so the complement can go either before or after the particle, unless the complement is a pronoun, in which case it precedes the particle.

The examples of phrasal verbs include: the transitive phrasal verb *call for* a gas mask (to require; demand), *go up and down* the stairs, *go up* (to move higher, rise or increase), *go down* (to move down to a lower level or place), and the intransitive *wind up* (to be in an unpleasant situation or placing after a lot has happened), *chat away* (to talk in a friendly informal way, especially about things that are not important), and *laugh away* (to dismiss as ridiculously or laughably trivial). On the other hand, instances of prepositional verbs are *sit at* (the table) and *sit on* (the trunk). Other multi-word constructions are represented by *empty the bucket into* which follows the pattern verb – noun phrase – preposition, verbs governing two prepositions. It is also interesting to analyse the multi-word verb *go out of* and *look out at* as they can be seen as phrasal prepositional verbs, that is, a verb followed by an adverb and a preposition; or either as a phrasal verb followed by an adverbial, in this case a prepositional phrase “of her mind and “at the street”.

Multi-word verbs may be the most difficult linguistic concept for EFL students to grasp both at levels of comprehension and production. One of the solutions to cope with them may be to start introducing them little by little in a systematic way, for example introducing matching phrasal verbs with non-phrasal verbs which have the same meaning, filling the gaps in texts with the proposed verbs, contrasting groups of multi-word verbs which share the same verb and differ in the preposition.: *John is looking at the baby/ after the baby/ for his friends /forwad to Sunday*, etc. This procedure is less functional than the ideal one, namely, practicing multi-word verbs in real situations, in native or nativelike contexts. But this is the unavoidable handicap of EFL teaching, versus that of ESL teaching. To reduce this problem, any EFL student will need to be provided with as much authentic material as possible, which is one of the assumed main task of EFL teachers.

4. Analyse in detail the following word which have been underlined in the text.

consumption / shuffle / pram / missus / secondhand / choosers / bockety

Consumption: [kən'sʌmpʃn] Uncountable noun. It is the old-fashioned word for “tuberculosis”: (= a serious disease of the lungs). It is part of a noun phrase introduced by “the”, which functions as a direct object of have.

Shuffle: [ʃʌfl] An intransitive verb followed by the adverb “up” and meaning “to walk by pulling your feet slowly along the ground rather than lifting them”

Pram: [præm] A British English countable noun meaning “a small vehicle with four wheels in which a baby can lie down while it is being pushed” The American Equivalent: is “baby carriage”

Missus: /'mɪsɪz/ Singular countable noun. A British English spoken informal word used when speaking to a woman whose name you do not know.

Secondhand: [ˈsekənd ‘ hænd] Compound adjective meaning “things that are not new when you get them, because they were owned by someone else before you”.

Choosers: /'tʃuːzə/. A countable noun in the plural which means “person who chooses or selects out”. The word is a derivative from the verb “to choose”.It forms part of the proverb “beggars can’t be choosers” which means “those without other resources must take what is offered.”

Bockety: /'bɔːkətɪ/. Slang for “crooked”. An adjective of Irish origin wich means “bent, twisted, or not in a straight line”

5. Comment on the characteristics of oral language on the example of this fragment.

The text comes from a narrative and it includes a dialogue between Angela McCourt and an old man, a resident of Roden Lane. It reflects an informal conversation between two neighbours. Oral language is characterised by a series of formal characteristics, formulae

and syntactic phenomena related to planning considerations in conversations. The main features of oral language present in the text are:

- The presence of first person narration throughout the conversation “I can tell you...”, “I hope you’ll be...”
- Parataxis: “with a chill in the air and Christmas ... and the lavatory...”
- Discourse fillers: “ha, ha”
- Repetitions of words and phrases: “it gets very powerful...very powerful altogether”.
- Contractions: “you’ll see”, “you’ll be happy”, “you’re making”, “the lavatory isn’t”.
- Use of ellipsis in questions: “your lavatory, missus?”, “Cleans?”
- Parenthetic structure, that is digressive structures inserted in the middle of another structure, and unintegrated in the sense that they could be omitted without affecting the rest of that structure or its meaning “This december now, thank God, with a chill ...”
- Use of tags: because of the little chance to elaborate structures in spoken language, some elements are added as an afterthought when in a logically structured and integrated sentence would have been placed earlier: “Cleans, she says”
- Linking adverbs which serve as utterance prefaces: “So, good night to you...”
- Interjections: inserts which have an exclamatory function, expressive of the speaker's emotion: “Ah, Jasus”

These are some of the most significant characteristics of oral language contained in the text.

To finish with this brief essay we should highlight the fact that all elements signalled in

combination with punctuation marks and the use colloquial words: e.g. missus, contribute to the orality of the text.

6. McCourt's family uses a pram for hauling the furniture home. Explain the phenomenon of synonymy and give as many synonyms of the verb haul as you can.

Synonyms are lexemes whose different morphological forms share the same meaning. There are several types of synonymy differentiated by some nuance or defined by the type of context where a given lexeme can occur but the other cannot. The following examples serve to demonstrate that there are no such things as a pair of perfect synonyms, that is, lexemes which could substitute for each other in all possible locations, since slight but detectable differences are invariably present. Possible synonyms for "to haul" are: to pull, to drag, to tug, to tow, all meaning: "to cause (a person or thing) to act or move in spite of resistance". However, there are some nuances that differentiate them:

To haul: it suggests that the object moved is large and heavy.

To pull: to use your hands to make something or someone move towards you or in the direction that your hands are moving

To drag: it suggests that the object is moved with difficulty because of some kind of resistance.

To tug: pulling an object vigorously or repeatedly, with roughness or violence.

To tow: pulling behind by a chain or line.

To sum up, we could conclude by saying that two words are synonyms if they are mutually interchangeable without affecting their descriptive meaning.