

Practising speaking skills – A literary approach to human dilemmas

by Rita Reinheimer-Wolf



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Viele Menschen stehen mindestens einmal im Leben vor einer Entscheidung, bei der es notwendig ist, zwischen Optionen wählen zu müssen, die alle keine erfreulichen Ergebnisse bieten. Da so ein Dilemma eine große moralische Herausforderung darstellen kann, ist es ein oft behandeltes Thema in der Philosophie und Literatur. Für den fortgeschrittenen Englischunterricht sind Dilemmas hervorragende Möglichkeiten für Lernende, ihre Sprechkompetenzen in glaubwürdigen Kontexten anzuwenden. Verwenden Sie diese Unterrichtsmaterialien zur methodischen Förderung der Sprechkompetenz und als Vorbereitung für mündliche (Abitur-)Prüfungen.

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Competences and skills:

By working with the material, students generally enhance their **reading comprehension**. Furthermore, they improve their **viewing skills** by watching a *YouTube* video. Finally, and most importantly, students practise their **speaking skills** by carrying out interviews, giving presentations and adopting different roles in group discussions with their peers.

Overview:

List of abbreviations:

A	Analysis	RC	Reading comprehension
CH	Characterisation	SP	Speaking
D	Discussion	SV	Survey
I	Interview	T	Working with the text
LVC	Listening/Viewing comprehension	V	Vocabulary
M	Mind Map/Visualising	W	Writing
PR	Presentation		

Topic	Material	Methods/Skills
1: The different faces of dilemmas	M1–M4	LVC, PR, SP, V
2: When identity and family trigger a dilemma	M5–M6	D, I, M, RC, SP, T
3: When discrimination triggers a dilemma	M7–M8	D, PR, RC, SP, T, W
4: When technological progress triggers a dilemma	M9–M10	A, D, RC, SP, SV, T
5: Delivering a speech on dilemmas	M11	A, CH, RC, SP, T, W

Topic 1: The different faces of dilemmas

M1 'Would You Rather' Dilemmas? A personality test



The video [...] 'Would You Rather' Dilemmas [...] (https://raabe.click/en_um_dilemmas) represents a personality test referring to difficult situations and decisions in people's lives. The viewer is asked to take the test while watching.



M2 Worksheet – 'Would You Rather' Dilemmas? A personality test

Pre-viewing activity/Vocabulary



- Before watching the video, read the list of words and the respective definitions that help you to understand the content better. Write down the translations of the words. Compare your translations with a partner's. If you are not sure, consult an online or a printed dictionary. Your teacher might also help you.

Title of the situation in the video	Vocabulary	Definition	Translation
A runaway train	1. impending doom	a very unpleasant or even destructive event that is going to happen soon and cannot be avoided	
	2. unsuspecting	not realising or noticing anything	
	3. to divert a train	to make a train change direction	
	4. to have a clean conscience	to believe that one's actions and decisions are fair	

Topic 2: When identity and family trigger a dilemma

M5 *The Joy Luck Club*



My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America. You could open a restaurant. You could work for the government and get good retirement¹. You could buy a house with almost no money down. You could become rich. You could become instantly famous.

5 “Of course, you can be a prodigy², too,” my mother told me when I was nine. “You can be best anything. What does Auntie Lindo know? Her daughter, she is only best tricky.”

America was where all my mother’s hopes lay. She had come to San Francisco in 1949 after losing everything in China: her mother and father, her home, her first
10 husband, and two daughters, twin baby girls. But she never looked back with regret³. Things could get better in so many ways.

We didn’t immediately pick the right kind of prodigy. At first my mother thought I could be a Chinese Shirley Temple⁴. We’d watch Shirley’s old movies on TV as though they were training films. [...]

15 Soon after my mother got this idea about Shirley Temple, she took me to the beauty training school in the Mission District and put me in the hands of a student who could barely hold the scissors without shaking. Instead of getting big fat curls⁵, I emerged⁶ with an uneven mass of crinkly black fuzz⁷. My mother dragged me off to the bathroom and tried to wet down my hair.

20 “You look like a Negro Chinese,” she lamented⁸, as if I had done this on purpose. [...]

In fact, in the beginning I was just as excited as my mother, maybe even more so. I pictured this prodigy part of me as many different images, and I tried each one on for size. [...]

25 In all of my imaginings I was filled with a sense that I would soon become perfect: My mother and father would adore me. I would be beyond reproach⁹. I would never feel the need to sulk¹⁰, or to clamor¹¹ for anything. But sometimes the prodigy in me became impatient. “If you don’t hurry up and get me out of here, I’m disappearing for good,” it warned. “And then you’ll always be nothing.”

30 Every night after dinner my mother and I would sit at the Formica¹² topped kitchen table. She would present new tests [...].

M8 Worksheet – *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter*

Pre-reading activity



1. How does an individual become an outsider? In a placemat activity, discuss this question with three classmates. Then present your essential conclusions to the class.

Reading comprehension



2. Read the excerpt from *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter* and take notes on the expressions in the table below.



3. In a Touch–Turn–Talk activity, sum up the main content of the extract. Come in front of the class, take a card that you will find face down on the desk. Then stick the card on the board, turn around to face the class and start talking about the term on the card referring to the action in the story.

Expressions for the Touch–Turn–Talk activity

Larry Ott	mechanical disinclination	Chabot Middle School
the boys on the swings	the drive-in movie theatre	Monkey Lips
Jackie's reaction	Mrs. Tally	"White boy!"
Carolyn grabbing Larry's scalp	anger	the class exploding into laughter

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Working with the text



4. With a partner, collect the topics covered in the text. Explain your selection.



5. In small groups, discuss a possible solution to Larry Ott's dilemma that would work nowadays. Present your results on the classroom walls for a Gallery Walk. One group member ("the expert") will stay with your visual display and all other students walk around the room to look at the presented results. The expert's task is to explain or to answer questions.



6. Imagine you are the principal of Larry Ott's school. Some days after the incident, you address all students of the school in the assembly hall (5 to 8 minutes). In your address, you should cover the following aspects:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why can the incident not be accepted? • Where do you see the reason of the incident? • Who is to blame for what happened to Larry? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened? • What are the consequences? • What will the future look like? |
|--|---|