

Worksheet for EFL/ ESL learners: Comprehension Tasks

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Notes for Teachers

The attached tasks aim to provide support for non-native speakers of English (high school and adult) who are watching the movie for the first time and who may not have much knowledge of the U.S. school system. The materials are appropriate for learners with a high intermediate or advanced level of English. If your students' level is lower, utilize the English subtitles (there are also Spanish and Chinese subtitles).

Since students can only discuss the movie if they have understood the main points, the materials aim to check and support comprehension only. Once students have understood the main points of the movie, they should be able to use the existing material on the web site for discussion and debate.

At the beginning of the movie, comprehension tasks require fairly intensive listening, often replaying short segments at a time. This is because the beginning of the movie establishes the characters and the main arguments in favor and against immersion education, so it is important that learners grasp these. Also, learners will be more able to do this kind of intensive listening work at the beginning of a class session. After chapters 8 and 9, there are fewer comprehension tasks as learners enjoy the rest of the movie with fewer interruptions.

To fully exploit these materials with the movie would probably take at least two hours. These materials could be used in two class periods, watching chapters 1-8 in the first lesson, and chapters 9- 18 in the second.

Speaking in Tongues

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1. [Introduction] Watch the Introduction. Number the children in the order they appear.

- _____ Durrell, African-American, Kindergarten, learning through Mandarin
 _____ Jason, Latino, 5th grade, learning through Spanish
 _____ Kelly, Chinese American, 6th grade, learning through Cantonese
 _____ 4. Julian, 8th grade, learning through Mandarin

2. Watch the introduction again. What reasons do the children's parents give for choosing an immersion program?

1. Julian's mother: _____
 2. Jason's mother: _____
 3. Kelly's mother: _____
 4. Durrell's mother: _____

3. [Chapter 1: YouTube videos and Dr Wang in car] Watch Chapter 1. Answer the questions.

1. Who are the people on YouTube? What are they saying or singing?
 2. Does Dr Wang agree with them?

4. Watch Chapter 1 again. Number the arguments in the order that you hear them.

- ___ English should be the national language of the United States
 ___ The different cultures and languages are assets (advantages) for the United States
 ___ In order to understand each other, people need to speak the same language.
 ___ In today's global economy, to be educated means to speak other languages.

5. [Chapters 2-3: Kindergarten classroom- “Before age 13”] Watch chapters 2-3. Circle T (true) or F (false).

1. In an immersion program, the teacher speaks to the children in both languages. T F
2. In an immersion program, the children also receive lessons in English. T F
3. Students in immersion programs find it harder to learn English. T F
4. Students in immersion programs have lower academic achievement than students in regular schools. T F
5. Immersion works best when the students are younger than 13. T F

6. [Chapters 4-8: Julian taking photo- “if he lost his Spanish.”] Watch chapters 4-8 and match the opinions on the left with the person on the right.

1. “We were worried that we wouldn’t be able to help with homework.”	a. Jason’s father
2. “Many children stop speaking their home language as they learn more English.”	b. Kelly’s father
3. “I was ashamed of my culture.”	c. Jason’s father
4. “I want my child to get a better education; I didn’t go to school.”	d. Julian’s parents:
5. “We don’t want our child to lose his first language.”	e. Jason’s teacher

7. So far in the movie, (chapters 1-8) we have heard a lot of discussion about immersion education. Before watching the next part of the movie, make a list of the reasons why a family might choose immersion education.

Example: Children who speak two languages have more opportunities in the future.

What arguments against immersion education have you seen?

8. [You Tube man- Durrell’s birthday party] Watch chapter 9, in which some of the main arguments for and against are summarized. Note the arguments that you hear. You may need to watch more than once.

9. [Durrell’s birthday party- Julian’s exchange student] So far, do you think the film itself is making an argument? If so, on which side? Watch chapters 10 and 11 with that question in mind.

10. [Kelly choosing a dress- restaurant scene] In chapter 12, Kelly's family are celebrating Chinese New Year at a restaurant. Watch the segment, and then answer the questions.

1. How do Kelly's relatives feel about learning Chinese? Do they all agree?
2. What point does Kelly's great aunt make?
3. How does the family react?

11. Watch chapters 13-18. Consider this question: How does each child benefit from his/ her school experience?

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ANSWER KEY

1. (Introduction: before the movie title)

1. 1. Julian 2. Jason 3. Kelly 4. Durrell

2. (Rest of introduction: Dr Ling Chi Wang at computer and in car)

1. Julian's mother: to help her son become a good world citizen
2. Jason's mother: to give Jason more opportunity, enable him to get a better job
3. Kelly's mother: so that Kelly can keep something of her family's culture
4. Durrell's mother: "a way out, and a way in."

3. The people on YouTube are in favor of English being the national language. Dr Wang does not agree with them.

4.

1. In order to understand each other, people need to speak the same language.

(YouTube man)

2. English should be the national language of the U.S. (YouTube singers)
3. The different cultures and languages of the U.S. are natural assets that we should use (Dr Wang)
4. If we remain monolingual, we are at a disadvantage in the global economy. (Dr Wang)

5.

1. F 2. T 3. F 4. F 5. T

6.

1. d 2. E 3. B 4. c/ a 5. c/ a

7.

Some of the arguments that have been raised so far are as follows.

In favor:

- The best time for children to acquire a second language is before age 13.
- Children who begin life speaking a second language but who only speak English at school tend to lose their native language, and don't learn to read and write it
- Students who do not have support in their native languages at school frequently dropout
- Learning the language allows children to retain something of their cultural heritage
- We need speakers of languages such as Arabic and Chinese to protect U.S. interests for security and economic growth

Against:

- The U.S. is becoming a Tower of Babel- we should speak one language in order to better understand each other

8.

Several of the arguments above are reiterated, and in addition the following arguments are made (much of this is quite difficult to hear/ comprehend; students would need to listen several times to be able to catch all of this):

- Knowledge of a second language stimulates knowledge of other subjects as well
- Very few high school students study Mandarin, a language spoken by millions
- Not speaking a foreign language is a limitation in international business

Against

- Non-native English speaking students need to receive more instruction in English so that they learn it well
- Schools should teach about American heroes, not Latin American ones
- It's expensive and difficult to find teachers.

10.

1. Kelly's family do not all agree about the value of learning Chinese at school. Kelly's cousin seems to be quite envious of Kelly's relationship with her grandmother; but Kelly's great-aunt feels that it is not necessary to teach Chinese in the schools. The family seems a little taken aback by the aunt's remarks.

11.

Jason is learning well in both Spanish and English, and maintaining his home language. Durrell is learning about Chinese culture.

Kelly is learning about her culture and communicating with her grandmother

Julian can travel to China and communicate with people there.