

LPF Reading Exemplar

Life in a Village School

Task Description

Students read two interview excerpts about life in a village school published in the school newsletter and answered questions that deal with the experience and the future of the lone student and her teacher. Their responses to the questions in part provided input to a writing competition which required them to make a comparison between Mei Wah's experience in a village school and their current school experience and state their preference with justifications.

Preparation

Before the reading activity, as a means to anticipate the theme and content of the reading texts, students discussed the following in groups:

- Why is there a drop in the number of students in some schools in Hong Kong?
- How would you feel if you were the only student left in your school? Explain why.

Learning Outcomes: CVO s 5-6

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CVO '7

Understanding and inferring information, ideas, feelings and opinions in a range of texts with some degree of complexity, using and integrating a small range of reading strategies as appropriate

CVO '6

Understanding and inferring information, ideas, feelings and opinions in a range of texts with some degree of complexity, using and integrating a range of reading strategies as appropriate

Questions			When students respond to the questions appropriately, they can:
1. Refer to the excerpt indicated and decide if the following information is True or False. Put a tick (✓) in ONE box only.			CVO '5 <ul style="list-style-type: none">for a), understand that Mei Wah's reticence is due to her worry over questions from friends, rather than due to the nature of her experience, by following her explanation using<ul style="list-style-type: none">semantic clues to locate the relevant part of the text to attend to, e.g. 'my friends' (Line 22), 'studying alone' (Line 23), 'situation' (Line 25), and to understand the reasons for Mei Wah's reticence, e.g. 'Not that I feel inferior' (Line 22), 'they will have a lot of questions to ask' (Line 25)syntactic clues, e.g. 'Not that' in 'Not that I feel inferior' indicates Mei Wah's rejection of the feeling of inferiority as the reason for her reticence, 'because' in 'I just don't feel like telling them my situation because they will have a lot of questions to ask' introduces a legitimate reason
	True	False	
a) Mei Wah's friends do not know that she is studying alone in Hok Tsung School, so they never ask her any questions about her experience there. (Excerpt 1)		✓	
b) Mei Wah has difficulty catching up at the beginning of Secondary 1 (Excerpt 2)		✓	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for b), follow the main idea about Mr Chan's concern over Mei Wah's future by using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – semantic clues, e.g. 'lag behind her classmates in her school work' (Lines 45-46), 'a difficult time catching up' (Line 47), to locate the relevant part of the text to attend to – syntactic clues, e.g. the future tense marker 'is going to' (Line 47) and the modal 'may' (Line 45), to help them understand that Mr Chan's concern is about Mei Wah's future, not the present
<p>2. Imagine that Mr Chan has just received a request from the town school Mei Wah is going to attend for information on her performance at Hok Tsung School. He needs to complete a simple form and send it back to the school. Study the form below. Fill in the space with brief notes based on the ideas from the two excerpts.</p> <p><i>(Suggested answers)</i></p>	<p>CVO '6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gather from the two excerpts details about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mei Wah's ability to mix with people, e.g. 'is deprived of a normal social life at school' (Line 41), 'may not have the social skills to mix with other students' (Line 42), 'is a nice girl to work with' (Line 37), 'respectful and well-behaved' (Line 37), 'talk to her as much as we can after lessons...' (Line 43), '...get the sole attention of the headmaster and the teacher' (Lines 12-13) – her school work, e.g. 'I can always negotiate with my teachers as to what lessons I want more or less of' (Lines 13-14), 'I particularly enjoy the piano lessons given by the headmaster himself' (Lines 15-16), 'There's no pressure from peers here and so there's little incentive to work hard' (Lines 46-47) • distil the details gathered into concerns
<p>Areas of Mei Wah's performance</p>	<p>Mei Wah's performance</p>
<p>Ability to mix with people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>may not have the social skills to mix with other students because she is the only student in the school</i> • <i>but gets along well with both the teacher and the headmaster because she can always negotiate with them her needs</i>
<p>School work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>enjoys school work because of the flexibility</i> • <i>but doesn't work hard enough due to lack of peer pressure</i>

			<p>and compliments and present them succinctly in the form of brief notes, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – that she is regarded as respectful and well-behaved by Mr Chan and that both the teacher and the headmaster talk to her as much as they can suggest that she gets along well with the staff – that she mentions she can negotiate with her teacher the time-table and that suggests she enjoys the school work because of the flexibility
<p>3a) Compare, in the form of a table, what Mr Chan and Mei Wah think are the effects of being the only student in Hok Tsung School in the two areas indicated.</p>			<p>CTM 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and compare Mr Chan's and Mei Wah's view in the two areas indicated, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – locate where Mr Chan talks about Mei Wah's potential problem in the area of relationship with other people and get the gist of his concern, i.e. Mei Wah cannot have the social skills to mix with other students (Lines 42-43) – locate where Mei Wah talks about the same thing, albeit in a more positive tone, and get the gist of her view, i.e. 'I get the sole attention of the headmaster...' (Lines 12-13) • present the ideas obtained in the form of a 2X2 table with clear headings for each column
	<i>Mr Chan's view</i>	<i>Mei Wah's view</i>	
Relationship with other people, including the students and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>may not be able to have the social skills to mix with other students</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>gets the sole attention of the Headmaster and the teacher</i> 	
Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>more flexible class arrangements</i> • <i>but little incentive for Mei Wah to work hard because of little pressure</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>can negotiate with her teacher as to what lessons she wants more or less of</i> 	
<p>b) Do Mr Chan and Mei Wah share the same view?</p> <p><i>They mostly do not share the same view, except over flexible class arrangements.</i></p>			

<p>4. Refer to the relevant excerpts as indicated and decide if the statements below are FACT or OPINION. Tick the correct box for each statement.</p>	<p>ATM 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> distinguish facts from opinions by using semantic and syntactic clues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for a), understand that the statement represents a factual description of what kind of school Hok Tsung School is for b), understand that ‘I don’t think’ introduces the speaker’s opinion and that Mei Wah’s description of her own ability as ‘not doing less well’ is subjective for c), understand that ‘Music and Art’ is factual information about which subjects the headmaster taught for d), understand that the modal ‘may’ signals the speaker’s uncertainty and his prediction about Mei Wah’s future 	
	F	O
a) Hok Tsung School is a village school. (Excerpt 1)	✓	
b) I don’t think that I’m doing less well compared with children studying in town schools. (Excerpt 1)		✓
c) The headmaster of Hok Tsung taught Music and Art. (Excerpt 2)	✓	
d) It may take Mei Wah longer to get used to and make friends when she starts secondary school. (Excerpt 2)		✓ <i>AT</i>

Text

Life in a Village School.

Excerpt 1: Interview with Mei Wah

R: Reporter

M: Mei Wah

R: We learnt from the newspapers that you're the only student studying in this school. How did that happen?

M: Hok Tsung is a village school. Six years ago when I first joined this school, I was the only pupil in Primary One. But I was not alone in the school – there were six other pupils studying in Primary Three and upwards. We used to have a happy time together and we sometimes had P.E. lessons as a class. But they left one after the other in the past two years as their families moved to urban areas or emigrated abroad. That's how I become the only student in this school.

R: Is it good being the only student in school?

M: I don't mind being the only student in my school. In fact, I enjoy a lot of privileges. I get the sole attention of the headmaster and the teacher. I can always negotiate with my teacher as to what lessons I want more or less. For instance, if I get the teacher's permission, I can finish a particular class earlier, for example, Arithmetic, and move on to other subjects like music. I particularly enjoy the piano lessons given by the headmaster himself.

R: Is life boring at Hok Tsung?

M: Absolutely not! Though there are no other students around, I can bring in my two dogs and I am allowed to pick wild berries and tomatoes in the school yard during the lunch break. I am sure students in other schools cannot have such fun.

R: Wow, it sounds really interesting! Your friends must be envious of your school life here?

M: I've never told my friends that I am studying alone. Not that I feel inferior. I don't think I am doing less well compared to children studying in town schools. I have eight lessons a day studying different subjects. I have homework to do every day and need to take examinations like everybody else. I just don't feel like telling them my situation because they will have a lot of questions to ask.

R: You are leaving Hok Tsung next year. How do you feel about that?

M: My feeling is mixed – on the one hand I look forward to a new and exciting school life that lies ahead but on the other hand, it must be very sad saying goodbye to the school, the people and everything here.

R: Reporter
C: Mr. Chan

R: May I know what subjects you teach at school?

C: Since I am the only teacher at Hok Tsung, I teach most of the subjects. The headmaster also helps with some cultural subjects like music and art.

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R: How do you feel about teaching only one student in the school?

C: Mei Wah is a very nice girl to work with. She is respectful and well-behaved. But I do have some worries for her.

R: What are your worries?

C: I'm afraid having only one student at school is not too beneficial to Mei Wah. In the first place, she is deprived of a normal social life at school which most students of her age enjoy.

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R: Are you worried that she may not have the social skills to mix with other students?

C: Exactly. The headmaster and I try to talk to her as much as we can after lessons but we just can't substitute her peers. So it may take her a longer time to get used to and make friends when she starts secondary school. My next concern is that when she gets to secondary school, Mei Wah may lag behind her classmates in her school work. There's no pressure from peers here and so there's little incentive to work hard. She is going to have a difficult time catching up at the beginning. But she should be O.K., say, after the first term.

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R: Has the school tried to do anything to help?

C: We once proposed to transfer Mei Wah to a school in the town centre but this was turned down by her parents. They thought Mei Wah enjoyed going to Hok Tsung so much that she should be allowed to stay. We respect their wish, of course.

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R: How do you like teaching at Hok Tsung?

C: I basically enjoy the flexible class arrangements at Hok Tsung. I don't need to stick to a rigid time-table. More time and attention can be given to the areas Mei Wah is weak in. Teachers in other schools may not have such kind of flexibility. The special situation at Hok Tsung has also fostered a close relationship between the school, the pupil and her family. We maintain good relations like a family.

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