



THE LETTER

Theme: Trafficking of children for forced illegal activity e.g. stealing

Time: Two 55-minute lessons, depending on the level of your students

Learners: Older teens, young adults and adults, B2+ (upper intermediate to advanced)

Materials: Nicu's imaginary letter, Nicu's true case study, information about human trafficking and modern-day slavery, student worksheet, slides, audio interview with the film director, resources for autonomous learning, Teacher's Guide

Content Learning Objectives

Students will learn that 'street children' may be victims of human trafficking and that they are forced to carry out illegal activity, e.g. theft.

Students will learn how a child can become a victim of human trafficking.

Students will learn about trafficking and modern slavery today, including the possibility of forced child labour in everyday products that we consume, use and wear.

ELT Learning Aims

Vocabulary: to abuse, to beat, to bully, to deceive, to exploit, to kidnap, to recruit, debt, foster family, human trafficking, vulnerable

SKILLS

Listening: Understanding specific details in a spoken personal narrative

Speaking: Expressing personal thoughts and opinions

Reading: Identifying specific details in a true narrative

Writing: Informal letter writing, expressing personal thoughts, emotions and opinions

About this Lesson

The lesson is based around a true story about Nicu, a 9-year-old boy who has been trafficked to the UK. The central focus is a beautiful short film, based on the true narrative, in which Nicu reads an imaginary letter to his mother. Sadly, his descriptions of wealth are far removed from the reality of the violence and exploitation he is subjected to. This is not the 'better life' that his parents were promised he would have. He is unhappy, alone, and trapped. The lesson finishes with an engaging music video that focuses on the exploitation of a trafficked child forced to work in a factory.

From The NO Project

Nicu is a gentle film and contains no explicit violence, however the underlying subject addresses cruelty and exploitation of children. As teachers, we can never know what memories, thoughts or emotions such content may trigger in our students, and this certainly includes adult learners. We ask you to be aware of this and to respond sensitively and responsibly.

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Introducing the theme

This pre-viewing task can be done in pairs, small groups or as whole group - depending on class size. The goal is to motivate the learners and to spark their curiosity, emotional engagement and imagination.

NOTE: If you are not able to use the slides, write the short sentences on the board - but not all at once. Reveal each sentence one at a time, to spark the students' curiosity and imagination.

- Tell the students they will soon watch a short film, and they will hear someone reading a letter.

Show slide #1: The Letter (or write **The Letter** on the board.)

- In pairs or groups, encourage students to imagine what the letter will be about. Allow the students to be creative and accept all their ideas. There are no right or wrong answers, no judgment.

NOTE: In piloting this lesson we have been struck by the intriguing, innovative, very personal ideas that students come up with as each slide is revealed. Students have suggested the letter might be to someone in prison, to someone who has passed away, or to a much-loved family member abroad.

Show slide #2: I miss you (or write **I miss you** on the board)

- Allow time for the students to develop and share their ideas.
- Use 'Wh' questions to encourage ideas. Who is speaking? Why?

Show slide #3: Dear Mama (or write the statements on the board)

**Dear Mama,
I miss you
Your son,
Nicu.**

- Encourage students to share their new ideas as the context becomes more defined. Suggested questions: Why does Nicu feel this way? Where is he?

Show slide #4: six statements (or write the statements on the board)

- Tell the students that these six statements are in Nicu's letter.
- Allow time for students to develop their ideas more fully. Again, if needed, prompt ideas with 'Wh' questions: How old is Nicu? What does he do? Why are the countries important? Why does he mention the mobile phone?

**a long time since we spoke
a big house in London
three countries
learn new things
latest mobile
do you think of me, too?**

Show slide #5: Nicu (photo)

- Tell the students that the person in the photo is an actor who plays Nicu in the film. Until now, the students may have assumed Nicu was an adult.
 - Ask the students to reconsider the letter, now that they know Nicu is a child.
 - Elicit 5-6 questions that the students want answered about Nicu.
- NOTE: If you cannot use the slides, play the video and at 10 seconds Nicu will be seen. Pause the film and explain that this character is Nicu.

Step 2: Video viewing 1

Nicu, see The NO Project YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcBLq6P5pkY&t=3s>

- Remind the students that the people in the film are actors, but the story is true.
- Explain that as they watch the film, they will hear Nicu reading the letter.
- Play the video all the way through. (approx. 6 minutes)
- After the first playing, in pairs or groups the students discuss the questions they had about Nicu.

Step 3: Discussion: Nicu is a victim of human trafficking

NOTE: As shown in the film, Nicu is a victim of human trafficking. While the powerful visual images are still fresh in the students' minds, we suggest that this stage focuses on the fundamental elements of the crime. We will return to Nicu's imaginary letter following this - but of course feel free to adapt the lesson sequence according to what works best with your particular group of students. It is possible that the students themselves will identify that Nicu is a trafficked child, who is forced to steal, and that he himself is the victim of the crime of human trafficking, officially known as Trafficking in Persons (TIP). We remind you that the film is based on a true story.

The questions below are designed to focus on key elements of the crime:

lack of freedom, forced illegal activity, threats, violence (physical and psychological), control, isolation, exploitation, financial gain for another person

Show slide #6: Nicu is a victim of human trafficking (or read questions out)

1. How does Nicu feel? Sad, lonely, unhappy.
2. What is Nicu forced to do every day? Steal phones, watches, money.
3. Is he happy about this? No, the other boy forces him to do it.
4. Who keeps the money? Another person, the adult who shuts the door.
5. Is Nicu allowed to leave? No.
6. Who controls his life? Why? Another person, the man who shut the door at the end.
7. What might happen if Nicu tries to escape? The traffickers will hurt him, threaten his family.
8. How does this film make you feel?

- Allow time for students to share their answers in pairs or groups, then go through each point as a class. Some students may respond quite emotionally to the film and if they seem reluctant to share their thoughts, encourage them to write down their feelings (in whichever language they choose). Don't rush this section, let the students take their time to develop their thoughts and emotional response.

- If the students are unfamiliar with the crime of human trafficking, refer back to the points listed above.

- Discuss these two important points with your students:

1. Both men and women can be human traffickers.
2. Human trafficking does **not** mean crossing an international border. A person can be a victim of trafficking in their own city, their own country.

Step 4: Video viewing 2: The Letter

The students now have an understanding of the reality of Nicu's daily life. The focus of this stage addresses the contradiction between the content of Nicu's imaginary letter to his mother and the cruelty of his life as a victim of human trafficking.

- Tell the students that when the filmmaker found out about human trafficking, she was so upset that she decided to use her skills to educate people.

- Inform the students that the film, Nicu, was made by professional filmmakers who all **donated their skills**. They did not get paid to work on the production.

- Tell the students that the letter that Nicu reads was written by the filmmaker. For her, the letter is how Nicu, a scared 9-year-old boy, could cope with the violence, isolation and abuse that he experienced every day.

- Before watching the video again, give the students the imaginary letter.

- Allow time for the students to read the letter.

- Ask students to find 4-5 points where what he says does not match his reality.

Suggested prompts to focus listening: big house, lots of friends, gold watch, new

country, mobile phone

- Play the video through to the end.
- Encourage personal responses to the questions.
- Discussion points: How is this letter a way of coping with reality? What do you think the future holds for Nicu? Why does he cry at the end?

NOTE: This lesson includes an audio interview with the filmmaker of Nicu. Students can download the file and listen to the mp3 at home.

Step 5: Reading: Nicu's true story

NOTE: Depending on the level of your students and time available you may prefer to address key vocabulary before reading about Nicu. Alternatively students can deduce the meaning from the reading passage.

- Tell students they will read Nicu's true story. What questions do they have? Write 5-6 questions on the board to focus on later.

Suggested questions:

Nicu mentions three countries – which countries? Where are his parents? How did he get to London? Why did his parents let him go? Did the traffickers kidnap him? What has happened to Nicu?

- Allow time for the students to read the narrative.
- Discuss the questions in groups then as a whole class.

Step 6: Language Review (optional - can be used for homework)

Student handout with new vocabulary. Depending on time available and the level of your students, this can be an in-class activity or done at home.

KEY

Task 1: 1c 2g 3a 4b 5f 6e 7h 8d

Task 2: 1 abused 2 threaten 3 vulnerable 4 beg 5 foster 6 forced

Step 7: Human trafficking & modern slavery

The goal of this stage of the lesson is to provide information about human trafficking and modern slavery, such as recent data and statistics, reasons why victims are vulnerable and ways in which children are exploited. Please note that we have intentionally not addressed commercial sexual exploitation in this lesson. Please see The NO Project lesson called EYES WIDE SHUT to focus on grooming and trafficking.

Show slide #7: Slavery today

Show slide #8: Traffickers look for vulnerable people

Show slide #9: Reasons for vulnerability

- Allow time for the students to express their thoughts about each slide.
- Tell the students that people around the world are taking action against trafficking – including youth artists.
- Ask the students to visit The NO Project site for further information.
- Show the next slides or artwork. Allow time for discussion. For further information about child exploitation in the cocoa/chocolate industry – please see The NO Project lesson called COCOA TRUTH. Slide #11 Cocoa Girl refers to this crime.

Show slide #10: NO ENTRY

Show slide #11: COCOA GIRL

- Give the students the handout **Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery**. This document will support the suggested projects in ‘Beyond the Class’.

Step 8: Video viewing – visual narrative with music by Radiohead

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DV1hQSt2hSE>

This powerful, engaging music video examines the relationship between the consumer and the person who has been forced to make the product. The short film juxtaposes the lives of two boys: one lives a ‘normal’ privileged life while another boy, thousands of miles away, appears to be a victim of human trafficking for forced labour. The music track is by Radiohead.

- Talk to the students about other ways children are forced to work. Point out that this is not an ‘after-school job’ where a child may help out their parents. Forced labour involves violence, control, and exploitation for financial gain.
- Play the video all the way through.
- In pairs or groups, students discuss the video and express their thoughts.
- Ask them if they think this video is effective. What is the message?
- Ask the students if they ever think about where everyday products come from.
- Encourage the students to visit The NO Project site and look at the option SLAVERY.
- As a class, go online and find out the anti-trafficking hotline number in your country.
- Provide the students with the handout about modern slavery and human trafficking.

Step 9: Writing – informal letter to express personal thoughts and opinions

- Students to write an informal letter expressing their personal thoughts, feelings and opinion.
- Who will they write to? A trafficker? Nicu? The person who owns the shoe factory in the music video?
- What do they want to express and why?

Beyond the class/ Personal Projects

Nicu's childhood was dominated by human traffickers. How does this contrast with your own childhood? What is your personal response to this crime? Many people around the world use their skills and talents to raise awareness and educate others about human trafficking and modern slavery.

Visit www.thenoproject.org to learn more about forms of modern slavery and to see the ways people are taking action.

Read the document in this lesson plan about human trafficking and modern slavery. Today, over 40 million people are in slavery, 10 million of those are children.

Autonomous Learning & further resources

Listen to a real interview with the film director of Nicu. Download the from <https://www.thenoproject.org/lesson-plans/>

To read true narratives by survivors - including people who were trafficked and exploited as children, visit this excellent site from Nottingham University, UK <http://antislavery.ac.uk>.

<https://priceoffree.com/>

This award-winning, feature-length documentary about the work of Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi is excellent. Watch the film and see how children are rescued from horrific situations of forced labour. THE PRICE OF FREE follows Satyarthi and his team of activists around the world on secret rescue missions as they hunt for missing children and work to reunite them with their families. Winner of the Grand Jury Prize, US Documentary, Sundance 2018.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsqKz1hd_CY

Taking Action: Going Public

Create a presentation about the exploitation of children to present to other students. What actions can we take? Find out the anti-trafficking hotline number in your country. What organizations exist in your community that take care of children and adults who are survivors of human trafficking?

**NO
SLAVERY**

EDUCATION FOR
SOCIAL JUSTICE



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Credits & acknowledgements

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Director and Production Team of film Nicu

Case study of Nicu: ECPAT www.ecpat.org.uk

<https://priceoffree.com>

<https://www.globalslaveryindex.org>

AHRC Antislavery Usable Past Project, University of Nottingham www.antislavery.ac.uk

This lesson plan was made possible through the support of the AHRC Antislavery Usable Past Project,
University of Nottingham.