

Learning English

American Stories

The Open Boat

by Stephen Crane

Lesson Plan
by Jill Robbins, Ph.D.

Introduction

This lesson plan is to accompany the American Stories series episode, *The Open Boat* by Stephen Crane.

A transcript of the story is included at the end of this lesson to print so students can read as they listen. Teachers who cannot play the audio from the website can read the story aloud or have students read it.

This lesson plan is based on the CALLA Approach. It is aimed at students at the high-intermediate level. See the end of the lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach. The following slide shows the five parts of this lesson plan.

Lesson Elements

Prepare

Present

Practice

Self-Evaluate

Expand

Prepare

Introduce the theme of the story. “This story is about the relationship between nature and humans. What other stories do you know about humans fighting a force of nature?”

Listen to students’ comments on what they know about struggles with nature. The students may know about natural events like tsunamis, storms, and earthquakes, or about other stories of survival at sea or in the wilderness.

Explain the class focus: “Today we will learn about how one writer shows us a struggle between humans and nature.”

Vocabulary

lifeboat - *n.* a small boat that is carried on a ship and that is used for saving the lives of the passengers and crew if the ship sinks

seaweed - *n.* a type of plant that grows in the sea

oar - *n.* a long pole that is flat and wide at one end and that is used for rowing and steering a boat

ashore - *adv.* on or to the shore of an ocean, sea, lake, or river

brotherhood - *n.* feelings of friendship, support, and understanding between people

Present

Introduce the story: “This story is about two kinds of relationships. As we read the story, we will **compare** and **contrast** what we learn about these two relationships. To do that, we will use *selective attention* to notice how the writer describes the relationships. Let’s begin the story and see what we can find.”

Play to ‘All the men saw were violent waves which rose and came fiercely down on them.’

Ask students “What words does the writer use to describe the sea?”

List the words on a screen or board as students say them.

Model the strategy: “I made a chart. On the left side I will write words Stephen Crane uses to tell about the humans’ relationship to nature. On the right side I will write words he uses to tell about the relationship between the people in his story.”

Relationship to Nature	Relationships with Humans
rough huge problem violent fierce	

Practice

“Now it’s your turn. Make a chart like mine on your paper. As we read the next part of the story, use the strategy of *selective attention* to notice how Stephen Crane tells us about the people and the sea.”

Play the story to “He always spoke in a low voice and calmly.”

“Get together with your neighbor now, and write what you noticed about the way the writer describes the relationship between the men in the boat.”

Ask several students to share what they noticed. Write on the board or screen as shown on the following slide.

Relationship to Nature	Relationship with Humans
rough huge problem violent fierce wild threatening anger	sad humor tragedy warm brotherhood friends leader calm

Ask students, “What do you notice about these two lists?” Lead a discussion of how Stephen Crane uses violent words to talk about the relationship people have to the sea and positive words to describe the relationships of the people with each other. “Let’s read the rest of the story now. As we read, use *selective attention* to focus on the different words the writer uses to describe these two relationships.”

Play to the end of the story. Ask students to add to their lists.

Self-Evaluate

Ask students to look at their lists. “Can you tell what you learned from this story in your own words? Write a sentence that says what Stephen Crane is telling us about humans and nature.”

Give students time to write their sentence.

Ask, “Think about how using *selective* attention helped you understand what you read. If you think it helped you, put your right thumb up. If you’re not sure, put your right thumb sideways. If you don’t think it helped, put your right thumb down.”

Expand

Ask students, “Are there other times when you can use *selective attention* while listening or reading?”

Listen to students’ ideas.

Continue, “This strategy is helps us pick out useful information. For example, when you are listening for your name to be called, you use this strategy. You can use it in many everyday situations. Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class. Let me know how it goes!”

Our story today is called "The Open Boat." It was written by Stephen Crane and is based on what really happened to him in eighteen ninety-six. Crane was traveling from the United States to Cuba as a newspaper reporter. One night, his ship hit a sandbar. It sank in the Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of Florida. Most of the people on board got into lifeboats. Crane was among the last to leave. There were three others with him: the ship's captain, the cook, and a sailor.



Woodcut by Robert Quackenbush

These four men climbed into the only remaining lifeboat. The boat was so small that no one believed it could stay afloat for very long. None of the four men thought he would ever reach the shore. But the men fought the seas bravely, with all their strength. Would they finally reach land? Here is Shep O'Neal with the first part of the story.

The small lifeboat bounced from wave to wave in the rough seas of the Atlantic. The four men in the boat could not see the sky. The waves rose too high.

The waves with their white tops pushed at the open boat with angry violence. Every man thought each wave would be his last. Surely, the boat would sink and he would drown. The men thought that most adults would need a bathtub larger than the boat they were sailing. The waves were huge, and each created a problem in guiding the direction of the boat.

For two days, since the ship sank, the four men had been struggling to reach land. But there was no land to be seen. All the men saw were violent waves which rose and came fiercely down on them.

The men sat in the boat, wondering if there was any hope for them. The ship's cook sat in the bottom of the boat. He kept looking at the fifteen centimeters which separated him from the ocean.

The boat had only two wooden oars. They were so thin – it seemed as if they would break against the waves. The sailor, named Billie, directed the boat's movement with one of the oars. The newspaper reporter pulled the second oar. He wondered why he was there in the boat.

The fourth man was the captain of the ship that had sunk. He lay in the front of the small boat. His arm and leg were hurt when the ship sank. The captain's face was sad. He had lost his ship and many of his sailors. But he looked carefully ahead, and he told Billie when to turn the boat.

"Keep her a little more south, Billie," he said.

"A little more south, sir," the sailor repeated.

Sitting in the boat was like sitting on a wild horse. As each wave came, the boat rose and fell, like a horse starting toward a fence too high to jump. The problem was that after successfully floating over one wave you find that there is another one behind it just as strong and ready to flood your boat.



As each wall of water came in, it hid everything else that the men could see. The waves came in silence; only their white tops made threatening noises.

In the weak light, the faces of the men must have looked gray. Their eyes must have shone in strange ways as they looked out at the sea. The sun rose slowly into the sky. The men knew it was the middle of the day because the color of the sea changed from slate gray to emerald green, with gold lights. And the white foam on the waves looked like falling snow.

As the lifeboat bounced from the top of each wave, the wind tore through the hair of the men. As the boat dropped down again the water fell just past them. The top of each wave was a hill, from which the men could see, for a brief period, a wide area of shining sea.

The cook said the men were lucky because the wind was blowing toward the shore. If it started blowing the other way, they would never reach land. The reporter and the sailor agreed. But the captain laughed in a way that expressed humor and tragedy all in one. He asked: "Do you think we've got much of a chance now, boys?"

This made the others stop talking. To express any hope at this time they felt to be childish and stupid. But they also did not want to suggest there was no hope. So they were silent.

“Oh, well,” said the captain, “We’ll get **ashore** all right.”

But there was something in his voice that made them think, as the sailor said: “Yes, if this wind holds!”

Seagulls flew near and far. Sometimes the birds sat down on the sea in groups, near brown **seaweed** that rolled on the waves. The anger of the sea was no more to them than it was to a group of chickens a thousand miles away on land. Often the seagulls came very close and stared at the men with black bead-like eyes. The men shouted angrily at them, telling them to be gone.

The sailor and the reporter kept rowing with the thin wooden oars. Sometimes they sat together, each using an oar. Sometimes one would pull on both oars while the other rested. Brown pieces of seaweed appeared from time to time. They were like islands, bits of earth that did not move. They showed the men in the boat that it was slowly making progress toward land.

Hours passed. Then, as the boat was carried to the top of a great wave, the captain looked across the water.

He said that he saw the lighthouse at Mosquito Inlet. The cook also said he saw it. The reporter searched the western sky.

“See it?” said the captain.

“No,” said the reporter slowly, “I don’t see anything.”

“Look again,” said the captain. He pointed. “It’s exactly in that direction.”

This time the reporter saw a small thing on the edge of the moving horizon. It was exactly like the point of a pin.

“Think we’ll make it, captain?” he asked.

“If this wind holds and the boat doesn’t flood, we can’t do much else,” said the captain.

It would be difficult to describe the **brotherhood** of men that was here established on the sea. Each man felt it warmed him. They were a captain, a sailor, a cook and a reporter. And they were friends. The reporter knew even at the time that this friendship was the best experience of his life.

All obeyed the captain. He was a good leader. He always spoke in a low voice and calmly.

“I wish we had a sail,” he said, “to give you two boys a chance to rest.” So they used his coat and one of the oars to make a sail and the boat moved much more quickly.

The lighthouse had been slowly growing larger. At last, from the top of each wave the men in the boat could see land. Slowly, the land seemed to rise from the sea. Soon, the men could see two lines, one black and one white.

They knew that the black line was formed by trees, and the white line was the sand. At last, the captain saw a house on the shore. And the lighthouse became even larger.

“The keeper of the lighthouse should be able to see us now,” said the captain. “He’ll notify the life-saving people.”

Slowly and beautifully, the land rose from the sea. The wind came again. Finally, the men heard a new sound – the sound of waves breaking and crashing on the shore.

“We’ll never be able to make the lighthouse now,” said the captain. “Swing her head a little more north, Billie.”

“A little more north, sir,” said the sailor.

The men watched the shore grow larger. They became hopeful. In an hour, perhaps, they would be on land. The men struggled to keep the boat from turning over.

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<http://learningenglish.voanews.com/>

They were used to balancing in the boat. Now they rode this wild horse of a boat like circus men. The water poured over them.

The reporter thought he was now wet to the skin. But he felt in the top pocket of his coat and found eight cigars. Four were wet, but four were still dry. One of the men found some dry matches. Each man lit a cigar. The four men sailed in their boat with the belief of a rescue shining in their eyes. They smoked their big cigars and took a drink of water.

Please come back next week for the second and final part of this story.

Words in This Story

lifeboat - *n.* a small boat that is carried on a ship and that is used for saving the lives of the passengers and crew if the ship sinks

seaweed - *n.* a type of plant that grows in the sea

oar - *n.* a long pole that is flat and wide at one end and that is used for rowing and steering a boat

ashore - *adv.* on or to the shore of an ocean, sea, lake, or river

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About the CALLA Approach

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is an instructional model for second and foreign language learners based on cognitive theory and research.

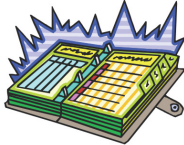



CALLA integrates instruction in priority topics from the content curriculum, development of the language skills needed for learning in school, and explicit instruction in using learning strategies for academic tasks.

The goals of CALLA are for students to learn essential academic content and language and to become independent and self-regulated learners through their increasing command over a variety of strategies for learning in school. CALLA can be used in ESL, EFL, bilingual, foreign language, and general education classrooms.






CALLA was developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, and is being implemented in approximately 30 school districts in the United States as well as in several other countries.

See a list of language learning strategies below.







Metacognitive Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES		
Plan / Organize	 <p>Planner</p>	<p>Before beginning a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Set goals. -Plan the task or content sequence. -Plan how to accomplish the task (choose strategies). -Preview a text.
Monitor / Identify Problems	 <p>Check</p>	<p>While working on a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Check your progress on the task. -Check your comprehension as you use the language. Do you understand? If not, what is the problem? -Check your production as you use the language. Are you making sense? If not, what is the problem?
Evaluate	 <p>I did it!</p>	<p>After completing a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assess how well you have accomplished the learning task. -Assess how well you have used learning strategies. -Decide how effective the strategies were. -Identify changes you will make the next time you have a similar task to do.
Manage Your Own Learning	 <p>Pace Yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Determine how you learn best. -Arrange conditions that help you learn. -Seek opportunities for practice. -Focus your attention on the task.


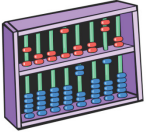
Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
		
Use Background Knowledge	 I know.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task. - Make associations between new information and your prior knowledge. -Use new information to clarify or modify your prior knowledge.
Make Inferences	 Use Clues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use context and what you know to figure out meaning. -Read and listen between the lines. -Go beyond the text to understand its meaning.
Make Predictions	 Crystal Ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Anticipate information to come. -Make logical guesses about what will happen in a written or oral text. -Make an estimate (math). -Make a hypothesis (science).
Personalize	 Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Relate new concepts to your own life, to your experiences, knowledge, beliefs and feelings.


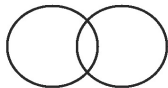


Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Transfer / Use Cognates	 Coffee/Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native language) to the target language. -Recognize cognates.
Substitute / Paraphrase	 Make it work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words or expressions.
  USE YOUR SENSES		
Use Images	 See it in your mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use or create an actual or mental image to understand and/or represent information. -Use or draw a picture or diagram.
Use Sounds	 Sound Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Say or read aloud a word, sentence, or paragraph to help your understanding. -Sound out/vocalize. - Use your "mental tape recorder" to remember sounds, words, phrases, and/or conversations.


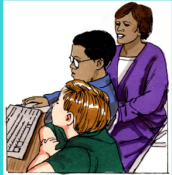
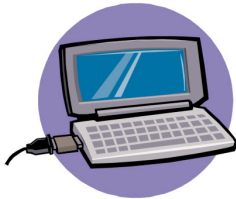


Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Use Your Kinesthetic Sense		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Act out a role, for example, in Readers' Theater, or imagine yourself in different roles in the target language. -Use real objects to help you remember words, sentences, or content information.
  USE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS		
Find/Apply Patterns	 abacus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Apply a rule. -Make a rule. -Recognize and apply letter/sound, grammar, discourse, or register rules. -Identify patterns in literature (genre). -Identify patterns in math, science, and social studies.
Classify/Sequence	 Life cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Categorize words or ideas according to attributes. -Classify living things; identify natural cycles. -Identify order and sequences in math, science, and social studies. -Sequence events in history.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Take Notes	 <p>PDA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Write down important words and ideas while listening or reading. -List ideas or words to include in speaking or writing..
Use Graphic Organizers	 <p>A Venn diagram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use or create visual representations (such as Venn diagrams, time lines, webs, and charts) of important relationships between concepts.
Summarize	 <p>Main Idea</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create a mental, oral, or written summary of information.
Use Selective Attention	 <p>Focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Focus on specific information, structures, key words, phrases, or ideas.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
 		
USE A VARIETY OF RESOURCES		
Access Information Sources	 <p>Look it up!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use the dictionary, the internet, and other reference materials. -Seek out and use sources of information. -Follow a model -Ask questions
Cooperate	 <p>Together</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work with others to complete tasks, build confidence, and give and receive feedback.
Talk Yourself Through It (Self-Talk)	 <p>I can do it!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use your inner resources. Reduce your anxiety by reminding yourself of your progress, the resources you have available, and your goals.