

The House with a Clock in its Walls

Teacher's Notes

The House with a Clock in its Walls is a new film adapted from a classic of American children's literature. This sequence uses one of the film's trailers to work on Halloween vocabulary and revise clothes vocabulary with A1+ students.

The Story:

- Orphaned Lewis Barnavelt comes to live with his Uncle Jonathan and quickly learns that his uncle and his next-door neighbor are a warlock and a witch on a quest to discover the terrifying clock ticking within the walls of Jonathan's house. Can the three of them save the world from certain destruction?
- The film is based on a very famous children's book *The House with a Clock in its Walls* (1973) written by John Bellairs (1938–1991), an American novelist working primarily in the Gothic genre. There are eleven further books in the Lewis Barnavelt series.

http://www.bellairsia.com/the_work/housecw/index.html

Language and structures :

- *a/an*
- plural of nouns
- pronunciation of the plural "s" ending
- invariable adjectives
- clothes vocabulary
- colours
- Halloween vocabulary
- *I can see*
- *there is/there are*

Culture:

Halloween : You can use this trailer just before Halloween to introduce the creepy atmosphere and review the vocabulary.

Resources and Equipment

We have provided for download:

- image files for the film title and poster
- a slideshow of images from the film to help practise clothes vocabulary and talk about images
- student worksheet
- an mp3 file for the phonology activity
- You will need an internet connection to stream the trailer.

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2119543/videoplayer/vi2531441433?ref_=tt_pv_vi_aiv_3
or: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIlx5-aGq_A

- And you'll need two fly swatters if you want to play the game.

Anticipation – Speaking

Show the picture with the title of the film, and ask the students to tick and say what they expect to see. **Activity A.1.**

Phonology



■ Thanks to the vocabulary seen in **Activity A.1**, you can explain the difference between *a* and *an*, do an exercise about the pronunciation of the “s” in the plural (**Activity A.2**), and play a game to cover the correction:

■ The **fly swatter** game consists of writing the three possible pronunciations [S], [Z] and [IZ] in big letters on the board. You then ask for two volunteers to come to the board and give each of them a fly swatter. When they are ready, you say a word and the pupils must choose the right pronunciation, hitting the board with their swatter. Roaring success!

Poster Description – Speaking

■ Then we suggest you project the film poster and ask the students to use: *I can see... there is/there are....*

■ The slideshow will allow you to introduce the characters, physical description and clothes vocabulary.

*Florence has got a purple dress and grey hair
Lewis has got...*

■ If it is too difficult for your 6èmes in October just use: *the dress is purple, the pyjamas are grey*

■ The images at the end of the slideshow can be used for hypotheses. *What do pupils think the characters are doing/saying?*

Watching the Trailer Without Sound – Speaking

■ You can access the trailer in English at either of these URLs:

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2119543/videoplayer/vi2531441433?ref_=tt_pv_vi_aiv_3
or: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIlx5-aGq_A

■ **Activity C.1.:** Pupils have the same list of vocabulary as in **Activity A.1**. This time they will tick the items they see in the trailer. You will probably need to play the trailer two or three times. It's possible to do this activity in pairs or groups.

■ When you are correcting what they saw, with slightly more advanced groups you could have them comment on the animals column. *Normally there are black cats, bats and spiders for Halloween...*

Watching the Trailer With Sound – Listening, Writing/Speaking

■ Your students will review invariable adjectives.

■ **Activity D.1.** invites pupils to enrich their productions by adding adjectives. This can be done in oral interaction, or you can ask pupils to write 4-5 sentences in class or as homework.

■ Then they will watch the trailer with the sound on this time, and focus on the adjectives they can hear.

Solutions

A.2. [s] puppets, clocks, bats, shirts
[z] gardens, schools, umbrellas, pumpkins, spiders, pyjamas
[iz] houses, suitcases, witches, octopuses

C. Places: a street, a haunted house, a garden, a school

Objects: an umbrella, cards, a suitcase, puppets, a clock

Halloween: a witch, a warlock, a pumpkin, a skeleton

Animals: a lion, an octopus

Clothes: a shirt, a kimono, a bow tie, pyjamas, goggles

D.2. Adjectives that can be heard:
good, safe, lucky, sweet, real, different, powerful, old, wicked, horrible, creepy