

Downton Abbey Teacher's Notes **B1**

This document aims to allow you to work on the trailer of the upcoming movie **Downton Abbey** at a **B1** level. **Downton Abbey** was first a British historical period drama television series that aired from 2010 to 2015. It was set as a fiction based in a historical landscape between 1912 and 1926, in the post-Edwardian era where historical events had a real influence on the British social hierarchy. The movie takes place after the end of the last season. Fans will definitely recognise the famous characters.

The trailer:

<http://www.focusfeatures.com/downton-abbey/video/official-trailer-1>

A bit long for class use, but if you would like a quick primer on who's who, this ten minute video summarises the six seasons of the TV series: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6veDL2tlvMY>

■ **At a 2nd level**, it could be used within the theme "the past in the present". Question suggested: what place for the past in our present?

■ **At a 1^e level**, it could be used within the theme "private spaces and public spaces" or "fiction and reality" or even "identities and exchanges".

Vocabulary:

■ British aristocracy, mansion lifestyle, modern versus old-fashioned

Grammar:

■ preterite, passive form

Cultural element:

■ British social classes and history

Step 1 - Pre-listening and listening

■ It is a good opportunity to introduce a method that will help students find personal strategies to apprehend an audio document. The students can follow a quasi-blank grid that goes from pre-listening

hypotheses to a comprehension of the implicit. You can choose to verify collectively step by step or after the global and/or the detailed comprehension in order to develop more autonomous strategies. You can also choose to provide this grid in French.

■ However, if you choose to use this document for an evaluation of the students' comprehension, we have provided you with activities to do so. In this case, it could be interesting to start with a pre-listening activity: the students could work in groups having previously divided the pre-listening objective into three areas of research.

■ One research area could be about the historical background from 1912 to 1929 in England: main world events that affected England, internal events, Royals of the time.

■ A second research area could be around the fictional aristocrats of the family (upstairs) in the form of a family tree.

■ A third research area could be around the fictional staff of Downton Abbey (downstairs) in the form of an organigram.

Step 2 - Speaking or writing

■ It could be timely at this stage to explain the situation for these aristocratic families at the turn of the previous century. David Cannadine, a British historian explained that after 1880 the old powerful families declined rapidly and had almost vanished in

the years after World War II, symbolized by the destruction of country houses, such as Downton Abbey. However, their wealth and political power has rebounded strongly since the 1980s thanks to the increase in value of the land and fine art which many owned in quantity.

■ In light of this historical background, have the students, in groups of 3, discuss and come up with a hypothesis about the role of this type of movie and one about the appetite for the television series. In 2nde, their hypotheses could feed into the question “what place for the past in our present?”

Step 3 - Language skills

■ This activity enables students to learn new expressions they are not used to.

To go further....

Ask students in groups of 3 to report on a similar type of television series or movie that has currently or in the past sparked equal enthusiasm. Each group could make a visual report to the class. Some students might find it interesting to explore what hasn't been done yet but would also be interesting for producers and directors to develop.

Transcript

<http://www.focusfeatures.com/downton-abbey/video/official-trailer-1>

Lord Robert: No maid? No valet? No nanny even?

Bertie Hexham: It's 1927. We're modern folk.

Thomas: Blimey!

Lord Robert: The King and Queen are coming to Downton.

Lady Mary: What?

Onscreen text: Welcome to a new era.

Mrs Hughes: I want every surface to gleam and sparkle.

Onscreen text: We've been expecting you.

Mrs Patmore: A royal luncheon, a parade and a dinner? I'm going to have to sit down.

Lady Violet: How's it all going?

Lord Robert: Mary's got it all under control.

Lady Mary: Hardly.

Lady Mary: I need your help, Carson.

Carson: I'll be there in the morning, milady. Don't you worry.

Lady Mary: Shall we really go on with it?

Anna: You mean, leave Downton? Downton Abbey is the heart of this community and you're keeping it beating.

Lord Robert: Remember to pray for us.

Lady Violet: I'll put in a word.

Lady Cora: Your majesties, welcome to Downton Abbey.

Lady Violet: Will you have enough clichés to get you through the visit?

Mrs Crawley: If not, I'll come to you.

Lady Violet: Oh, here we go.

Step 1- Listening activities

1. Downton Abbey (a Yorkshire country house, home and seat of the Earl and Countess of Grantham)
2. England, U.K
3. 1927
4. roughly 12 (Robert and Cora Crawley, Mary and Edith Crawley, Dowager Countess of Grantham, Isobel Crawley, Tom Branson, Mr. Carson, Mrs. Hughes, Mr. Barrow, Anna, Mrs. Patmore) - students must watch out for recurring faces as well as main actors speaking. The names of these characters are not important nor relevant to find but can be matched to the family tree and organigram.
5. 3

6. The Royals, the aristocracy and the servants

B. 1. “No maid, no valet, no nanny even”

2. The King and Queen of England

3. Every surface must gleam and sparkle.

4. A Royal luncheon, a parade and a dinner.

5. Mary hardly seems to have the organisation under control so she calls in Mr. Carson. Some students may guess he USED TO work at Downton Abbey and that perhaps he has retired. So Mary pulled him out of retirement for this event.

C. 1. Mary asks, “Should we really go on with this?”

2. Anna rephrases, “You mean, leave Downton?”

3. “Downton Abbey is the heart of the community and you’re keeping it beating” means the entire town thrives thanks to the activities and the work provided by the Crawleys who live at Downton Abbey.

Step 3 - Language Skills

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