

TEXT	'THE OLD BRIDGE' from <i>POEMS BY A LITTLE GIRL</i> (1920)
AUTHOR	Hilda Conkling
THEMES	Working life (unit 12), places (unit 13), out and about (unit 14)
VOCABULARY	Places, and what people do in them, feelings
WRITING	Students write sentences about things people do in places in a town.
SPEAKING	Students talk about how they imagine the bridge in the poem and then they draw a picture.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Hilda Conkling was an unusual child who, between the ages of four and fourteen, wrote a number of original and sophisticated poems, which her mother (a university English lecturer) edited and published.

Depending on what your class know about rhetorical forms, you might want to discuss the concept of *personification* – giving human characteristics, thoughts and feelings to inanimate objects, as a way of getting us to think about what they are and what they do. We would probably never stop to think about a bridge having feelings, but when we do this, we engage empathetically and imaginatively with our world and look at things in a new light.

### WARMER

Find some pictures of different kinds of bridges – some old, some new, big and small. Choose some that are used by people and vehicles and some which are only used by cars or trains. Ask students to say why they think these bridges might be important for people.

### ABOUT YOU

Most communities – whether villages, towns or cities, will have a bridge of some kind. Encourage students to think about bridges in their town or close to where they live and say who or what uses them. Do the same with rivers – elicit ideas about what rivers are used for (boats, swimming and fishing are more obvious uses, but stronger students might also suggest: transporting things, accessing the sea, tourist trips, etc.).

Check students know what a poem is and clarify the fact a poem doesn't have to rhyme. Students might be interested to know that Hilda's mother collected her poems and had them published.

- 1 The simple answer is 'people' but elicit the reasons why people use a bridge – to go to work, visit family and friends, go somewhere else, transport things (if you are selling things, for example), get to school, etc.

- 2 Before students read the poem again, draw attention to the verb *nod* – the glossary definition doesn't go into detail about what a nod can mean. Elicit suggestions about what a *nod* means by miming it and asking how it is used (to say 'hello', to say 'yes', to agree, to say 'well done', to show you understand or are listening, etc.). Although students probably won't know the language for these responses, they will understand them when they see you nodding. Provide translations if appropriate.

### Suggested answers

- 1 Because it's very hard work and people are walking over it so it hurts
- 2 Based on the meanings of *nod* discussed above, students can have different interpretations – perhaps the sky is just saying 'hello' or it could be saying 'well done'.
- 3 This is a more complex idea to express due to the personification of the bridge and the use of anthropomorphic language. Try to elicit the idea that when we cross the bridge, we make a noise but we don't think of this noise as the pain felt by the bridge (see Background information).
- 4 The sky and the surface of the water – although they are really the same thing.
- 5 When the ships go down and when the children play.

### VOCABULARY

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#### Answers

- 1 I see sorrow in her face.
- 2 The leaves are floating on the lake.
- 3 Your bag is a very heavy weight.
- 4 The bus is now passing the park. (Beginning and end positions of *now* are also possible.)

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#### Answers

- 1 C 2 A 3 C 4 B

### WRITING

- 5 Students can work alone or in pairs. Go through the instructions and the example. Ask for example sentences to share with the class and discuss the verbs and actions students have chosen. Compliment students on their ideas but if there are sentences with mistakes, write them on the board and ask the class to identify what the mistakes are.

### MIXED ABILITY

For the writing activity, group stronger students together and ask them to think of five other places in a town not on the list and write about what you can see people doing there.

## SPEAKING

- 6 It's important that students talk about their ideas for the picture before drawing it. Tell them not to copy the bridge in the photo on the Worksheet. Suggest they make notes as they talk and use these when they draw their picture. Ask them to think about other ideas if you see they need more input (*What time of year is it? / What time of day? / Does the bridge have any signs on it – to other towns? / How much of the river can you see in the picture? / What can you see on the river?*).