

Blue plaques

Learners can expand their knowledge of culture and customs in English-speaking countries by finding out about notable people and where they lived or worked.

This fun, 90-minute A2 lesson includes movement while learners practise speaking, listening, reading and writing. It can be adapted for similarly famous people and buildings around the world.

Warm up

Write the following questions on the board before the beginning of the class or as you ask them.

- Who was Florence Nightingale?
- What did she do?
- When was she born and when did she die?
- Where did she live?

Show the class Florence Nightingale's blue plaque and tell the students about the scheme. Blue plaques are mindmaps, a way to commemorate people who contributed to our society, such as writers, artists, musicians, sportspeople, and politicians. There are over 900 plaques in London and hundreds more around the UK.

Running dictation

Cut out the six blue plaques on the next page and hang them up around the room. Split the class into pairs. The partners take turns to either 'run' or write. The runner has to run to a plaque and try to memorise it. They then return to their partner and tell them what they read. The writer writes down the information. If the runner forgets part of the information or can't remember how to spell something, they are allowed to go back to the paper and reread it. The plaques must stay put and the learners cannot shout across the room. The first pair to have the information from all six plaques wins. *Note:* Make sure there are no obstacles that can be tripped over.

Remind learners of language used for clarification.

- Sorry, I didn't catch that.
- Could you say that again, please?
- Sorry, what was his/her name?
- Sorry, where did he/she live?
- Sorry, what did he/she do?
- Could you spell that, please?

When everyone has finished, ask the pairs to take a look at the plaques on the walls together and compare what they have written down with what is on the plaques. When the learners are back in their seats, have learners ask each other about the names on the plaques, using the questions you wrote on the board at the beginning of the class. Monitor use of simple past verbs. Correct and guide where necessary.

Blue plaque tour

Next, tell the learners they will be conducting a guided tour of popular blue plaques in London. Walk around the room as a group, stopping in front of each plaque in turn. Invite a different learner to tell you about each of the plaques. Model the language first:

"Here we are in front of 10 South Street in Mayfair, London. This is where Florence Nightingale, a nurse (in the Crimean War), lived. She was born in 1820 and died in 1910."

Follow-up ideas

- Ask the learners to choose one of the plaques and find out more about that person for the next lesson.
- Ask learners to research a little more about blue plaques at home and bring along a photo or drawing of a plaque commemorating a person they admire.
- Search for Blue Plaque videos on the English Heritage YouTube page: www.youtube.com/user/EnglishHeritageFilm

› Dagmar Taylor, ELT materials writer and teacher trainer based near Munich

13 Mallord Street, Chelsea, London



7 Bruce Grove, Tottenham, London



23 Brook Street, Mayfair, London



4 St James's Square, St James's, London



58 Sheffield Terrace, Holland Park, London



10 South Street, Mayfair, London

