

## Real Time - Lesson Plan

### Part I – Pre-reading exercise (15 minutes)

- Divide the class into groups of four, and invite them to go online for 15 minutes and report their findings after surfing on Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) and YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)). What did they notice about the websites?

### Part II – Reading and discussion (15 minutes)

- Read the poem 'Real Time' (5 minutes)
- Sharing in groups of four (10 minutes)
  - What do they think the poem is about?
  - Find out and discuss techniques used that have helped to strengthen the poem.
  - Poem title: do they like the title? Why isn't it called 'Facebook'? If they can choose, what would their preferred title be?
  - Which websites did they go to and what did they find? What strikes them as interesting? How has technology changed us?

### Part III - Coaching (by teacher; 15 minutes)

- **Synopsis of poem:**
  - The poem focuses on how online social media has changed the platform for friendships and social life, highlighting that the sweeping changes do not only impact on the younger generation, but affect people of all ages and social groups – including the middle aged; the business traveller; husband and wife; and the white collar worker, for instance.
  - On the one hand, the poem outlines the attractiveness of the online network: it is highly accessible and instantaneous, and with all sorts of applications (keeping a pet; growing a plant) to generate mutual entertainment and social support.
  - At the same time, the poem warns of the danger when people rely too heavily on the online world for communication and social support. For example, is it really the right place to express love to one's wife? Will people get addicted to the online social activities? Can we rely on the online network entirely to make friends?
  - In the concluding stanza, there is a comparison of Facebook to pop culture. How much is Facebook or online social activities part of pop culture?
- **Structure:** Similar to a riddle, the poem is structured in such a way that 'Facebook' is not mentioned until the very last part. How does it help to convey the meaning? The different stanzas describe how different age or social groups make use of Facebook. Together, the stanzas work like jigsaw pieces, giving a glimpse of the dynamic side of city life.
- **Language:** conversational and casual to imitate the casual nature of online social network. This can be seen from the i) frequent use of run-on lines and ii) use of slang, short forms or abbreviated terms (e.g. 'Doesn't matter'; 'Not getting stuck').
- **Poem title:** a good poem title should inspire wonder while at the same time hold the fabric of the poem together. To ensure that this is kept as a 'riddle poem', the revelation of 'Facebook' must be reserved for the last stanza. However, 'Real Time' gives people more food for thought as the very word 'Real' is to make fun of the fake reality of online network, as well as suggesting the real time quality of online conversation.

- **Poetic devices:**

1. **Personification:** ‘...with a small flat full of outfits getting old’ (1<sup>st</sup> line in 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza) – outfits do not grow old, but the ‘mother’ probably does. This is a way of personifying the outfits to reflect the mother’s concern about getting old.
2. **Imagery:** words such as ‘walls’, ‘mahjong table’; ‘mooncake’; ‘cave’ etc. are used to blend everyday, domestic objects with the fantasy of virtual reality. A lot of action words are also used (e.g. drawing, reading, petting etc.) to create a sense of movement and vibrancy.
3. **Symbol:** ‘Campbell soups’ is used as a symbol. It refers to the highly domestic, commonplace quality of online activities and records. It also refers to Andy Warhol’s best known masterpiece Campbell’s Soup Cans from 1962, pointing to the way virtual reality is part of modern life, and that it will become a chapter of interest for the future generations.
4. **Exaggeration:** ‘ocean trawl’ (4<sup>th</sup> line in 4<sup>th</sup> stanza) – clearly, the ocean trawl is an exaggeration of the quantity of friends the white collar worker can find over the internet. The use of exaggeration highlights the attractiveness of the online social media.
5. **Assonance:** ‘She **plays baking cakes**’ (3<sup>rd</sup> line in 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza) – the use of similar vowel sounds helps to bring out the playfulness of the act. The cakes in virtual reality are in fact ‘toy-like’, so the repetition of ‘a--’ vowels reinforces the idea.
6. **Rhetorical question:** asking questions that don’t really expect an answer, will reinforce the impact of the lines. For example, the voice asks ‘Who knows?’ (1<sup>st</sup> line in 8<sup>th</sup> stanza) – the question is actually used to reinforce the poet’s belief that what happens in virtual reality is getting more and more ‘real’, as one day all the online records and archives will become part of modern history.
7. **Euphemism:** it is the way we describe things in a less direct way. This can help to create surprise for the reader. For example, what does it mean to have a cat that ‘doesn’t smell, doesn’t even purr’? (5<sup>th</sup> line in 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza) – this is because the cat is not a real one. This indirect description of the cat helps to highlight that these creatures exist only in the computer, i.e. in the virtual reality.

**Part IV – Brainstorming and assignments (15 minutes)**

- Brainstorming ideas for writing poems on technology, for example, ask students to each select a newspaper article related to technology and write a poem based on what they have read.
- Discuss and come up with a set of images and words/jargon appropriate for technology poems