

## IELTS writing – interpreting maps

### Notes for teachers

#### Aim

Help students to prepare for Task 1 in the academic writing component of the IELTS exam.

#### Objectives

Help students:

- to write a text describing changes on a map
- to understand maps
- to understand the Key related to maps
- to juggle several sets of information and text simultaneously
- to develop their psychometric skills
- to see patterns

The exercise may be used or adapted with a range of levels and several times with the same class.

#### Materials

The materials consist of:

- worksheets
- a blank map to be enlarged for presentation
- a set of symbols for a Key that can be copied as sticky labels or that can be cut up
- a Key for the sticky labels
- three maps of an island for the years 1900, 1950 and 2000 and a Key

#### Methodology

##### Presentation

**Materials: map of island, Key to maps and labels**

1. **The blank map.** Print the map off and enlarge it on a photocopier or draw your own very rough map on a large sheet of paper. Give each student an A4 version for reference. Stick the map on the board.
2. **The Key to the Maps.** Give each student a copy of the Key.
3. **The labels.** Print a set of labels, one sheet for each pair. You can print them on special label paper [The size is 8 x 2]. If you don't have labels, the students can tear the printed sheet.

#### Procedure

- Ask the students to give the island a name.
- Tell the class where a particular place from the Key is on the map, e.g. *there is a city in the centre of the island. There is a fish farm off the northwest coast of the island.*

- Invite a volunteer to stick the appropriate label in the appropriate place on the map. If you do not have sticky labels use blutack or tape.
- If the class thinks the student volunteer has put it in the wrong place allow someone else to correct it.
- When you think you have done enough, ask the students to describe the map on the board. At this stage help them with the language.
- As a development you can ask the students to give you the instructions while you put the labels on the map. Put a few of them in the wrong place!

### Exercises

There are 6 different exercises based on the same model text, so you will not use all of them together. However, you can choose several of them to help your students prepare for describing changes on a map.

#### Exercise 1: spot the difference

- Give the students the three maps and the Key.
- Give them a few minutes to discuss the maps in pairs.
- Ask the students a few questions at random about the maps, like: *Where are the mountains? What was the population in 1950?*
- Give the students Exercise 1 and ask them to find the differences and correct them. Point out that the differences relate to factual information about the text.
- Give them the first one as an example: *the text says two maps when it should be three.*
- If the students do not know particular vocabulary, encourage them to find the differences and look at the unknown words afterwards. Doing this should help the students engage with the text and the maps without focusing on the language.
- You could put the students into groups and turn the exercise into a timed competition
- Check the answers with the correct text in Key.
- The text in the Key has not been marked so you that can turn the checking of the correct answers into an exercise. Give the students a copy of the text in the Key and ask them to check their answers. When they have done this, make sure they have found all the differences.

#### Exercise 2: missing words

- The text in the exercise is the same as in Exercise 1. Follow the procedure exactly as for Exercise 1 above. However, you may wish to let the students have the list of missing words, depending on the level of the class.

### Exercise 3: guided writing 1

- For weaker students, give them the exercise after they have done either Exercise 1 or 2.
- Tell them that they are not allowed to look at the text in the previous exercises or the Key.
- Ask them in pairs to fill in the blank spaces. They may of course use other words than those in the model text as long as they fit.
- Check the answers with the class as a whole before allowing them to look at the Key. When they look at the Key, ask them to check their spelling. As they are doing this, go round the class checking.

Or

- For more able students, you may wish to go straight into this exercise after the opening sequence as in exercise 1 above.
- Give the students the three maps and the Key.
- Give them a few minutes to discuss the maps in pairs.
- Ask the students a few questions at random about the maps, like: *Where are the mountains? What was the population in 1950?*

### Exercise 4: guided writing 2

- This exercise can be done in a number of different ways. Use the procedure described in Exercise 1 and 2 above to introduce the maps to the students.
- Give the students Exercise 4 and the maps. Ask them in pairs to insert the jumbled sections of text into the model answer.
- Check the answers.
- For guided writing practice, ask the students to cover the texts (A -I) now that they have them in order.
- Ask them to fill in the blanks in the model text using the maps. They may use their own words and not just those in the exercise.
- **Or** ask the students to cover the text. Then tell them to complete sentences A-J using the maps to create a text.
- Either way the students are looking at the organization of the text: (i) *the beginnings of the sentences (A-J) which contain the connecting devices;* (ii) *and the ends of the sentence which contain the new information.*

### Exercise 5: choosing verbs

- You can do the exercise after Exercises 1 and 2 above. Or give the students the exercise and the maps and follow this sequence as in Exercise 1 above.
- Give the students the three maps and the Key.
- Give them a few minutes to discuss the maps in pairs.
- Ask the students a few questions at random about the maps, like: *Where are the mountains? What was the population in 1950?*
- Then divide the students into pairs and ask them to choose the appropriate verb for each alternative. Point out that there may be more than one answer in each case.

- Check the answers with the class as a whole.
- As a development, give the students the list of verbs in the Key:
  1. A illustrate D depict
  2. C took place D happened
  3. B was
  4. A going up B climbing
  5. B expanded
  6. A included
  7. B was established
  8. A saw D witnessed
  9. D continued to grow
  10. A increasing C Climbing D Rising
  11. C sprang up
  12. A linking B connecting C joining
  13. A built D constructed
  14. A running D lying
  15. B was built
  16. A to link B linking
  17. B happened D took place
  18. C were
- For guided writing practice, ask the students in pairs to use the verbs and the maps to help them re-construct the text as far as they can. The verbs will act as clues to the sequence of the information. It will help them collocate verb and noun.

### Exercise 7: writing frame

- After any of the exercise above, ask the students to work in pairs, groups or alone and using the maps write a text describing the maps.