

3.20

Post Scriptum

Focus	To use a famous writer's creativity as the basis for a writing activity.
Level	Upper intermediate and above
Time	20-30 minutes
Preparation	None, apart from Proust's letter which is provided here.

in class

- 1 Ask the students what they know about Marcel Proust (they do in France, where I live).
- 2 If you have the facilities, go on Wikipedia and have the students read a bit about him, his life, his art.
- 3 Now tell them you want to dictate a short letter he once wrote, but that you will start from its Post Scriptum.
- 4 Dictate the following to your students:
Please forgive me. I've just found it.
- 5 Ask the students to work in pairs and write the letter. Obviously the students will have to take a few decisions, namely:
 - a Who is the recipient? Friend? Relative? Lover? Consequently, what register should they use?
 - b What does *it* refer to? How important is *it* to Proust?
- 6 Leave the students some time to write.
- 7 Have the students share their work with the class. Don't make any comments on the language but you can make mental notes to go back to imperfections later if you wish.
- 8 Now dictate Proust's original letter to your students:
Dear Madam,
I left my cane at your house last night. Kindly give it to the bearer of this note.
Kind regards.
Marcel Proust.
PS: Please forgive me. I've just found my cane.
- 9 Ask the students why they think Proust sent the letter even after finding his cane. Would they?

Comment

This activity both amuses and intrigues the students. It's rather surprising that Proust decided to send his note in the end. What's even more surprising, however, is the brevity of the text, very un-Proustian!