

# Teacher's notes

## Exploring the interview format

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### Lesson aims

Equip students with the tools to identify styles of questioning, point of view and the subtext to characters.

### Lesson objectives

Students analyse Roger Mills' interview with a careers officer through listening, reading, note-taking and role play.

Students write an account of a time they were interviewed.

Students prepare to conduct their own interview.

### Resources

Dictionary

**The Interview** by Roger Mills, published by Centerprise in 1976

Audio of the **The Interview** by Roger Mills

Questions table (below, p.3)

See also: <https://www.ahackneyautobiography.org.uk/trails/education/2>

### Starter activity.

Ask the class: 'Can you think of places where young people are interviewed?'

### Activity 1:

Play the audio of Roger Mills reading **The Interview**. Background: Roger Mills grew up in Stoke Newington and left school at 16. He wasn't sure what he wanted to do for work but he knew he wanted to do something creative. **The Interview**, published by Centerprise in 1976, is a deadpan account of his experience in the careers office.

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## Activity 2

This is a reading and note-taking exercise. Use the table and definitions on **pages 3-5 below** to guide you. Make sure the students understand there are three points of view: Roger as interviewee, Roger as writer, and G. Jackson. Ask the

**This can use this as a SPAG exercise:**

When reading **The Interview** students should be encouraged to make a note of any words they do not understand, then use a dictionary to define them, then put into a new sentence.

## Activity 3:

For more advanced classes, you can introduce the word 'subtext'. The subtext to a character is their unspoken thoughts or motives. In **The Interview**, sometimes the writer gives a strong clue. For example, G. Jackson 'looked put out' that he hadn't been given all Roger's exam results. Readers can also guess the subtext from the gestures, actions, and tone of address of the characters, and from how they might feel in a similar situation. But subtext is never definite – there are always different readings.

Ask students to fill in the table on p. 6. Before they begin their role play, compare different answers, so the class can see that subtext is ambiguous.

## Activity 4

Students write a short account of a time they were interviewed. It can be real or imagined.

## Activity 5:

Before students begin, refer back to activity 2 to remind them about open and closed questions. More advanced students should also reflect on the subtext to their interview.

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### Activity 2: Reading and note taking

Open question	Open question	Open question
Rhetorical question	Rhetorical question	Rhetorical question
Closed question	Closed question	Closed question
Follow-up question	Follow-up question	Follow-up question

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## Activity 2 definitions

**Closed question:** A question that can be answered with either a single word or a short phrase or can be answered with either 'yes' or 'no'.

Closed questions have the following characteristics:

- They give you *facts*.
- They are *easy* to answer.
- They are *quick* to answer.
- They keep control of the conversation with the *questioner*.

### For example:

Your art teachers, are they good?

What did you get for your chemistry exam?

I saw you last year, didn't I, Roger?

**Open question:** A question that deliberately seeks longer and expansive answers. An open question cannot be answered with a one word answer. An open question is as much about the attitude of the questioner as the form of the question.

Open questions have the following characteristics:

- They ask the interviewee to *think* and reflect.
- They will give you *opinions* and *feelings*.
- They hand control of the conversation to the *interviewee*.

### For example:

What did you do on your holidays?

How do you like to cook your sausages?

Why is that so important to you?

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**Rhetorical question:** A question that does not need an answer. A **rhetorical question** is a figure of speech in the form of a **question**. It is asked to make a point rather than to get an answer.

For example:

What sort of photos do you take – Snapshots?

Is the Pope Catholic?

Do you want to be a failure for the rest of your life?

Can fish swim?

Can birds fly?

Do pigs fly?

Who cares?

Why bother?

How should I know?

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**Activity 3: Use this table to help make notes for the role play**

What is said	Subtext: what the character really means or feels