



The Oldest Profession in the World

A TALKING POINTS
LESSON FOR
ENGLISH READING
SPEAKING AND
WRITING

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Introduction

Are there sex workers in your city/town?

Do you approve of sex workers? Why/why not?

If people are desperate for money – do you think sex work is a good choice? Why/why not?

The Oldest Profession in The World

Read Miriam's account of her life as a sex worker.

Some people might regard what I do — what all the other girls do — as immoral. They say that we are disgusting, that we should be arrested. But I think what I do is provide a valuable service.

I am a sex worker. That is the term I like to use.

There are other words to describe what I do — prostitute is the most common. Then there are other terms; like hooker, whore.

I don't like these words at all. So, sex worker. It makes me sound more dignified.

How I got to be a sex worker is the same as most of the other girls around here — I needed the money.

I had my son, I am a single mother, and my husband had run off. He was useless. I didn't have a job and I had to feed myself and my son so I took action into my own hands.

One of the girls in my neighbourhood told me about providing a service. A special service for men. When she explained it to me, I was horrified. The only person I had had sex with before that was my husband. I thought there was no way I could sleep with another man — many other men — for money.

But things became more difficult at home. I had no money left.

I couldn't get a job in my town. Unemployment is very high where I live. And I don't have any qualifications. I didn't go to college. I left school, worked in the local supermarket, met my husband and got married. I thought that would be my life.

I had to do something. My son needed new shoes. And winter was coming. There would be heating bills to pay. And we would both need to eat.

So I went to see my friend. She assured me that it would be fine.

The first time I met a client — he was a married man who worked in a bank — I was so nervous. I was shaking like a leaf.

But the time went very quickly and I had money in my hand. As soon as the man left, I went out and bought my son the new shoes he needed.

After that, it became much easier. I found regular clients — men who wanted to see me again and again. They paid to have sex with me but they also told me all about their lives. Sometimes the

men just want to talk. They talk about their jobs, their business, sometimes their wives and children.

I do my business in a small house in my town. Me and three other women pay rent on the house and we use it to meet our clients. That way I can separate my work from my home. I don't want my son to see what I do.

Before I became a sex worker I thought that it was so wrong. But now I think I provide a great service. If the men didn't come to see me or one of the other girls around here, he would go somewhere else.

This is the oldest business in the world. It should be legal. That way we could have police protection.

But I no longer feel ashamed of what I do. Why should I?

Reading Comprehension Questions

What does Miriam think what other people's opinions might be about what she does for a living?

How does she refer to herself?

What other words are used to describe this work?

Why does Miriam prefer the word 'sex worker'?

What was her situation before she became a sex worker?

What was Miriam's initial thoughts about becoming a sex worker?

Why couldn't she find work?

What did her son need?

What other things was Miriam worried about?

What do you know about her first client?

What did Miriam do with the money she made?

What does she say about the men she meets? What do they talk to her about?

What is her current situation as a sex worker? Who does she work with?

What does Miriam say that sex workers need in terms of help?

Essential Vocabulary

immoral	disgusting	arrested
a valuable service	sex worker	prostitute
hooker	whore	dignified
single mother	run off	useless
I took action into my own hands	neighbourhood	horrified
assured	client	shaking like a leaf
police protection	ashamed	

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Notebook—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”

Discussion Questions

What do you think about Miriam's way of earning money?

Do you think this kind of job is safe or dangerous? What are the dangers? Why do these dangers exist?

In your mind, is there a difference between the three terms – sex worker, hooker, prostitute and whore? What are the differences? If you see no difference, can you explain why not?

Do you think Miriam could have tried harder to find a legitimate job? Or do you think her situation made it impossible?

Miriam speaks of other girls being sex workers in her town. Why do you think there are so many in her area? What are the reasons?

If you hear the word 'prostitution', what comes into your mind?

What do you think about sex workers?

Should prostitution be legal? Why/why not?

What are the dangers of being a prostitute?

Does prostitution exist in your country?

What does the government in your country do about prostitution?

Sex work has been around for thousands of years. Do you think it will exist in the future?

What will people's attitudes be to prostitution in the future?

Can men be prostitutes? Why/why not?

Is there a maximum age for prostitutes? What is the oldest a prostitute can be?

Do you think some prostitutes enjoy their work? Why would they enjoy it?

What about the ones that hate it? Why would they hate it?

Have you ever paid for the services of a prostitute?

Would you ever consider to be a prostitute? Why/why not?

Debate – Sex in the City

Divide the class into two groups – for and against.

Choose one student to chair the debate. Or let a student volunteer for this. This person is called The Chair.

The debate has two teams:

Team 1 – You believe that sex workers should be allowed to work in your city/town and be legalised. This means full protection from the police and authorities. It would also mean that all sex workers can be tested regularly for any STIs and for any drugs. This means better safety for the people that employ their services.

Team 2 – You strongly oppose the idea of sex workers in your town/city. If the town allows sex workers then it normalises the idea that a woman can sell her body for money. You believe that there should be more emphasis on stronger morals and to teach people to live honourable and decent lives. You also think that anyone can find a job if they are prepared to do any kind of job.

Each team can have around 15 minutes to prepare their arguments.

The debate begins and The Chair must ensure there is order and that each side has an equal opportunity to share their views.

Decide on a time for the debate and at the end see who has the strongest arguments.

I Would Do Anything For Money...

In the story above, Miriam talks about her need to do sex work. She needed money to buy shoes for her son and she needed to put food on the table.

What kind of work would you do if you were desperate?

Take a look at the list of (maybe) undesirable jobs below and say whether you would or would not do this job. Give good, solid reasons why/why not.

- Sewage Worker
- Pimp
- Foot Massager
- Crab Fisher
- Adult Entertainer
- Seller of Fake Goods
- Drug Dealer
- Fencing (selling stolen goods)
- Hitman (or woman)

Role Play: Sex Worker

This is a role play exercise.

There are two characters in this role play:

1. You have no money and you have no job. You need to feed your children. Your only choice is to be a sex worker. Then you will get immediate money and then you can buy food for your children.

You know that it is dangerous and the life of a sex worker is not good but what choice do you have?

2. You are the best friend or family member of the character above. You do not agree that they should be a sex worker. You want to try to convince them that this is not a good idea. Think of other things they can try to get money. But you must convince them that their idea to be a sex worker is terrible.

Take some time to prepare your role play then show the class.

Writing

Read Miriam's account at the beginning of the lesson again.

Now write this in your own words as a short story. It can be in first person or third person. It can also be in any style you want – dramatic, horror, romantic – but write it in your own personal style.

When you have finished, read your story out in front of the class. Or show your teacher.

Teacher's Notes

This lesson plan is not suitable for younger students!

Ideally, you should only do this lesson with adults – or maybe with high-school age students. It depends on the culture and society of the country where you are teaching. I will leave this to your own discretion.

Introduction

Go through all the questions and ask the students. Elicit as many responses as you can. If you are a foreign teacher working abroad, you might want to add one or two comments of your own about sex workers in your culture to try to get more responses from the students.

The Oldest Profession in The World

Pick a few students to read through all the text. You might need to read through twice, but hopefully, the students are at the right level where they can pick up most of the meaning.

Reading Comprehension Questions

You can do this by going through all the questions as one group with all the class. Or you could put the students in small groups. Or let them do the whole exercise individually.

Essential Vocabulary

This is a list of vocabulary that may be very useful to your students.

You can do this for homework or as an in-class activity.

For either purpose, I would suggest doing the following:

- Look the word or phrase up in a dictionary
- Write down the meaning of the new word in the students' vocabulary notebook
- Think of a sentence using the new word

You could do this as a class activity for the first four or five words, then assign the rest as homework. Students often need to practice using a dictionary, so this could be a useful exercise for them.

Discussion Questions

This is a class activity.

Go round the class and ask the students all the discussion questions one by one. Their answers and responses may encourage further or follow-up questions.

The point is for the students to become active in discussing what they have read and the vocabulary they have gained.

Debate: Sex in The City

This is a class exercise where you divide all the students into two teams – for and against.

As the teacher, you can choose a student to chair the meeting. Alternatively, you can let a student volunteer do this. This person should control the debate and make sure everyone can speak for equal time.

The rest of the activity is self-explanatory.

Ideally, you should just sit at the side of the class and observe – this is a student-based activity and you should let them do it on their own. But if you think they are losing control of what they are doing, then you need to intervene and steer them in the right direction.

Time the activity according to the level of the class and how well the students can engage in the activity.

This should be a high energy and engaging exercise.

I Would Do Anything For Money...

In this activity, you go through all the unsavoury jobs and find out which ones the students would do if they were desperate for some quick money.

The students should provide very solid reasons why they would choose these jobs. Don't just let them say something simple like "because I want to". Push them for clear reasons.

I would suggest going through all the jobs first. If you have access to pics or videos of these jobs then show them in class.

Once all the students know what the jobs are, then go through them all one by one.

Role Play: Sex Worker

This is a simple role play exercise for two people.

The two people are good friends or are related to each other. One has serious money problems and needs some money fast. So the only option is to be a sex worker.

The other person doesn't agree with this decision and wants to talk them out of it.

Be careful! This role play could easily descend into laughs and joking around. But it could be interesting to see a display of sympathy from the second character.

Writing

This is very straightforward. The students just have to rewrite the original story at the beginning of the lesson plan in their own words. They try to write it as a short story.

Credits

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