



# **WORKING CLASS HERO**

**a Talking Points lesson plan for  
English reading and speaking**

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Working Class Hero.....	4
Reading Comprehension Questions.....	8
True or False?.....	10
Essential Vocabulary.....	12
What is the Correct Synonym?.....	14
What is the Correct Antonym?.....	16
Working Class Words.....	17
Discussion Questions.....	20
Role Play.....	23
Debate.....	25
Writing.....	28
True or False — Answers.....	29
What is the Correct Synonym? — Answers.....	31
What is the Correct Antonym? — Answers.....	33
Working Class Words — Answers.....	34
Credits.....	36

# Introduction

What does working class mean?

Are you working class?

Is there a class system in your country? Can you describe it?

# Working Class Hero

***Read Paul's account below:***

**I'm working class. No doubt about it, that is what I am.**

I grew up in a council flat in London. Left school at fifteen and started work.

***I was one of the lucky ones though.***

I managed to get an apprenticeship to be an electrician.

And I've been an electrician all my life. It's all I know.

I don't live in a council flat anymore. When I got married, my wife told me we have to buy a house.

***To me, this just seemed like a total fantasy.***

No one in my family had bought a house before. I was the first one in my family to do it.

And there was no way I could buy a house in London. Not where I grew up anyway.

All the flats and houses in my old neighbourhood had been bought out by yuppies a few years back.

There used to be loads of pubs round there too. Now all gone. It's all wine bars and fancy little restaurants these days.

I've never been to any of these places. I just wouldn't fit in. I don't speak the same as the people that go there.

When I met my wife, she was working in a hospital. Not a nurse or anything like that. She worked in medical records.

But now we live on the outskirts of London, and she looks after the kids. She's a full-time mum.

I still go to the football. I've been a football fan all my life and I go to the matches as often as I can. I'll never stop doing that.

But even that has changed. I go with my mates, and we're all from the same background.

But there's these other people that go. They all sound upper class. It just seems like two separate groups to me.

Where we live now, it's pretty much all working-class people.

And the things we have in the neighbourhood — things that working-class people like.

It would be a waste of time having really high-class restaurants here. No one would go to them.

In our neighbourhood, it's mostly pubs. That's what the people like.

We can go there and have a drink, and we can eat something too.

***Is the food going to win any big awards for fine dining?***

***Probably not!***

But the people like it. And that's all that matters.

Even the supermarkets we have...

In my old neighbourhood in London, the supermarkets are the kind of places that more middle-class people like. They have food and wine there that those people want.

***But for us, that would be a waste of time.***

We have supermarkets where we can just buy the things we need for the house. It has fresh food and vegetables that we need.

But we don't have really expensive bottles of wine. Who would buy it?

Our kids go to a normal comprehensive school. Most of the schools are like that.

To be honest, the schools here — ***all government schools*** — are much better than the school I went to as a kid.

But we don't have any private schools. There's no demand for them.

**I am working class. Listen to the way I speak!**

And I am proud of being working class.

I don't have any problem with who or what I am.

***Why should I?***

# Reading Comprehension Questions

Who is telling this story?

Where is he from?

What class is he?

What kind of residence did Paul grow up in?

How old was Paul when he left school?

What job did he do when he left school?

Does he do the same job today?

Where does Paul live now?

Does he own or rent his home?

What happened to Paul's old neighbourhood?

What places could Paul see in his old neighbourhood before?

What can he see there now?

Does Paul go to these new places?

What job did his wife do before?

What does she do now?

What does Paul like to do in his free time?

How long has he enjoyed doing this?

What complaint does Paul have about going to football



matches today?

What class are the other people that live in Paul's neighbourhood today?

What kind of places can Paul see often in his neighbourhood?

Does he like these places?

What kind of school do Paul's children go to?

Is this school better or worse than Paul's school when he was a kid?

Are there many private schools in Paul's neighbourhood?

Is Paul happy to be working class?

## True or False?

Read the sentences below and decide if they are true or false based on Paul's story.

- Paul grew up in a council flat in London.
- Paul left school at the age of 15.
- When Paul left school, he joined an apprenticeship to be an electrician.
- Paul's wife wanted to buy a house.
- Paul's family had never bought a house before.
- Paul couldn't buy a house in his old neighbourhood.
- Paul and his wife live on the outskirts of London.
- Paul's wife used to work in a hospital.
- Paul's wife is now a full-time mum.
- Paul is a football fan and still attends matches.
- Paul and his friends are all from a working-class background.

- Paul thinks there are two separate groups of people at football matches today.
- Paul's current neighbourhood is mostly made up of working-class people.
- Paul's neighbourhood has pubs and not so many posh restaurants.
- Paul's children go to a local government school.

# Essential Vocabulary

no doubt	council flat	apprenticeship
electrician	total fantasy	yuppies
flats	neighbourhood	posh people
pubs	wine bars	fancy
fit in	medical records	outskirts
matches	mates	background
upper class	comprehensive school	no demand

## 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:

**No doubt** — *this phrase is used to indicate the speaker's belief in something being true.*

***"There's no doubt that Arsenal will win on Saturday."***

**Council flat** — *a kind of accommodation owned by the local government and rented out to the local people at a low rent.*

***“I’ve lived in a council flat all my life.”***

Do this with all the vocabulary and, over time, this will help improve all your English skills — reading, writing, speaking and listening.

# What is the Correct Synonym?

Look at the table below.

Match the word with the correct synonym.

Check your answers at the end of the lesson plan.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Synonyms</b>
no doubt	community
council flat	internship
apprenticeship	upscale
electrician	no need
total fantasy	undoubtedly
yuppies	bars
flats	suburbs
neighbourhood	unbelievable
posh people	apartments
pubs	games
wine bars	government housing
fancy	patient records
fit in	upbringing
medical records	electrical worker
outskirts	public school
matches	young professionals

mates	high society
background	upper crust
upper class	blend in
comprehensive school	wine lounges
no demand	friends

# What is the Correct Antonym?

Look at the table below.

Match the word with the correct antonym.

Check your answers at the end of the lesson plan.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Antonym</b>
no doubt	privately owned house
council flat	reject
apprenticeship	strong desire
total fantasy	lower class
posh people	city centre
fancy	enemies
fit in	questionably
outskirts	working-class folk
mates	private school
upper class	professional
comprehensive school	simple
no demand	reality



# Working Class Words

Look at the list of words below that we usually associate with working-class people and culture.

Now find the right meaning in the sentences under the table.

You can find the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

working-class hero	manual labour	factory
union	loyalty	shift work
labourer	salt of the earth	blue-collar
minimum wage	paycheck-to-paycheck	down to earth
working-class values	hard-working	tradesman

## Meanings:

- Refers to the typical kind of employment for working-class people.
- A worker that does the kind of job that requires the use of tools and working with one's hands.
- A collection of workers that band together whose aim is to improve working conditions and pay.
- A building where goods or products are manufactured or

assembled.

- Diligent and dedicated to the work or job that one is doing.
- Work that is usually hard work and can be physically tiring. Usually involves working with hands.
- A person from the working class community who is well-respected and admired.
- A skilled worker in a particular kind of trade. Could be an electrician, a plumber or a carpenter.
- A set of values or beliefs usually adhered to by working-class people.
- A lifestyle that means intense budgeting of one's salary so that you have no money left at the end of the week or month.
- A phrase used to describe working-class people who are honest, reliable and straightforward.
- The lowest legal salary that an employer can pay the workers.
- The kind of work where you have to work at different times of the day.
- Used to describe someone who is greatly committed or dedicated to his community or people.
- A person who shows great humility and treats people with respect. Someone who has no pretences and is very grounded in life.

***Now write your own sentences!***

When you have found all the correct meanings for the words, make sentences of your own using each word or phrase.

Show your sentences to your teacher.

## Discussion Questions

What do you think of Paul's upbringing? Did he have a poor start to life do you think?

How do you think Paul's life has developed? Has his life become better or worse?

Why do you think Paul was the first person to buy a house in his family? What could be the reasons for this?

How do you think Paul feels about his old neighbourhood? Do you think he feels any sense of resentment? Why/why not?

Does Paul have a good job?

What about his wife?

Paul describes his wife as 'a full-time mum'. What does he mean by this exactly?

Paul loves football. Is this predominantly a working-class sport? Or can anyone enjoy it?

Does Paul like where he lives now? What do you think he likes about it?

Paul says he is proud to be working class. Do you think he really is? Or do you think he would prefer to be in a higher class?

What do you think about Paul's life?

What do you think of his lifestyle?

Is this a happy life, do you think?

What class are you and your family?

Are you happy to be in this class?

What do working-class people in your country do?

What kind of jobs do they have?

What about their lifestyle?

What kind of things do they like to do in their free time?

Is it wrong to be working class?

Or should people strive to be middle class or higher class?

Can you describe working-class people and working-class culture in your country?

How has this changed over the years?

Are there any negative stereotypes about working-class people?

What about positive stereotypes?

Do working-class people have the same opportunities in life as middle-class people?

Can working-class people go to university as easily as middle-class people?

What are the differences between working-class people and middle-class people?

What kind of interests do working-class people have?

Are working-class people less rich than other classes?

If so, why is this?

Do working-class people contribute to society in positive ways?

# Role Play

**This is a role play activity.**

There are two people in the role play.

**Character 1** — You are working class. You are a worker. Maybe you are working in a factory. Or maybe you work with your hands as a repair worker.

**Character 2** — You are middle class. You are a university professor. You went to a good school and then you went to a good university.

## The Situation

You are both on a train. You are sitting opposite each other and you strike up a conversation.

Maybe one says to the other: ***Are you going to Bridgetown?***

Then you start asking about each other's lives.

Questions you could ask:

- What do you do?
- Did you have to go to university to do this job?

- How did you become a <<insert job title here>>?
- Are you married?
- What does your husband/wife do?

You are both respectful of each other's lives but very curious.

By the end of the role play, you should have found out many things about each other's lives.

In pairs, get together and form your role play.  
Practice what you are going to say to each other.

***When you are ready, show your role play to the class.***



# Debate

**This is a debate activity.**

There are two teams in the debate.

## **Team A**

You are a group of working-class people.

You all have very typical working-class jobs and lifestyles.

But you sometimes feel that you are not treated as well in the city as middle-class people.

There are some issues with your neighbourhoods, and you would like the city to consider making changes.

## **Team B**

You are a think tank employed by the city to do research on the lives of working-class people.

You have many questions you would like to ask working-class people, in order to understand their lives and also the issues that they may have.

## **The Situation**

You have all been brought together into the town hall to discuss things.

Team A has many things they wish to express in the debate.

Team B has many questions to ask Team A.

The purpose of the debate is for Team B to find out as much as they can about the lives of the people in Team A.

Divide the class into two teams of equal number.

In your teams, you should prepare what you need to say in the debate.

**Team A** — your team should think of all the criticisms and grievances you have about your neighbourhoods.

Maybe you are concerned about the following things:

- Crime
- Schools
- Maintenance of infrastructure
- Houses
- Local shops
- Food markets
- Jobs

**Team B** — your team needs to prepare as many questions as you can.

Think about the following questions as examples — but you

must prepare more questions of your own.

- Are the sidewalks or pavements broken? Are people able to walk along them with ease?
- How many students are in each classroom in the local schools? Is this too many? Or just enough?
- Are there any signs of infrastructure in need of repair? Are street lights not working? Drains blocked, etc?
- Do your neighbourhoods have enough local shops that provide most of the things for the local community?
- What do the people do for entertainment?
- What kind of crime happens in your area?

***When you are ready, begin the debate!***

# Writing

**This is a creative writing exercise.**

You are going to write a poem. The title of the poem is:

## **Working-Class Hero**

You can write your poem in any style you want.

Try to use some of the vocabulary and ideas used in this lesson plan.

When you have finished your poem, you can read it out loud in front of the class.

***Or give it to your teacher for review.***

## True or False — Answers

Check your answers below.

How many did you get right?

Paul grew up in a council flat in London. - True

Paul left school at the age of 15. - True

When Paul left school, he joined an apprenticeship to be an electrician. - True

Paul's wife wanted to buy a house. - True

Paul's family had never bought a house before. - True

Paul couldn't buy a house in his old neighbourhood. - True

Paul and his wife live on the outskirts of London. - True

Paul's wife used to work in a hospital. - True

Paul's wife is now a full-time mum. - True

Paul is a football fan and still attends matches. - True

Paul and his friends are all from a working-class background. - True

Paul thinks there are two separate groups of people at football matches today. - True

Paul's current neighbourhood is mostly made up of working-class people. - True

Paul's neighbourhood has pubs and not so many posh restaurants. - True

Paul's children go to a local government school. - True

# What is the Correct Synonym? — Answers

Take a look at the synonyms below.

Did you get them all right?

<b>Word</b>	<b>Synonyms</b>
no doubt	undoubtedly
council flat	government housing
apprenticeship	internship
electrician	electrical worker
total fantasy	unbelievable
yuppies	young professionals
flats	apartments
neighbourhood	community
posh people	upper crust
pubs	bars
wine bars	wine lounges
fancy	upscale
fit in	blend in
medical records	patient records
outskirts	suburbs
matches	games
mates	friends

background	upbringing
upper class	high society
comprehensive school	public school
no demand	no need



# What is the Correct Antonym? — Answers

Take a look at the antonyms below.

Did you get them all right?

<b>Word</b>	<b>Antonym</b>
no doubt	questionably
council flat	privately owned house
apprenticeship	professional
total fantasy	reality
posh people	working-class folk
fancy	simple
fit in	reject
outskirts	city centre
mates	enemies
upper class	lower class
comprehensive school	private school
no demand	strong desire

# Working Class Words — Answers

Check your answers below.

How many did you get right?

## Meanings:

Refers to the typical kind of employment for working-class people — blue-collar

A worker that does the kind of job that requires the use of tools and working with one's hands — labourer

A collection of workers that band together whose aim is to improve working conditions and pay — union

A building where goods or products are manufactured or assembled — factory

Diligent and dedicated to the work or job that one is doing — hard-working

Work that is usually hard work and can be physically tiring. Usually involves working with hands — manual labour

A person from the working-class community who is well-respected and admired — working-class hero

A skilled worker in a particular kind of trade. Could be an electrician, a plumber or a carpenter — Tradesman

A set of values or beliefs usually adhered to by working-class people — working-class values

A lifestyle that means intense budgeting of one's salary so that you have no money left at the end of the week or month — paycheck-to-paycheck

A phrase used to describe working-class people who are honest, reliable and straightforward — salt of the earth

The lowest legal salary that an employer can pay the workers — minimum wage

The kind of work where you have to work at different times of the day — shift work

Used to describe someone who is greatly committed or dedicated to his community or people — loyalty

A person who shows great humility and treats people with respect. Someone who has no pretences and is very grounded in life — down to earth

## Credits

This English speaking topic is courtesy of ManWrites.

This content is copyright ManWrites 2023 — ManWrites©2023

For more information, go to [www.manwrites.com](http://www.manwrites.com)

Or join my mailing list below and I will send you more ESL teaching ideas.

## ManWrites Mailing List