



COPYRIGHT (c) 2006. C.K. SHAYIN

# Houseboats

Shefali Ray ■ India

## Lesson: The Houseboats of Kashmir

(50 minutes)

This lesson is an example of using a topic related to students' background knowledge and building an English lesson around it. Although this lesson is based on the houseboats of Kashmir, you can base your lesson on tourist attractions in your country, using appropriate brochures and maps and developing your own text.

### SKILLS TO BE EMPHASIZED

Reading and writing

### TARGET STRUCTURE

Simple present tense in descriptions; participles: *floating, coloured, growing, built, decorated, attached, running, interconnecting*

### TARGET VOCABULARY

*calm, jade, willow, anchored, cedar, shimmering, magnificent*; compound words such as *houseboats* and *showpieces*; words that conjure a mental picture, e.g., *jade-coloured waters*

### OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson students should be able to:

- say at least five things about the houseboats.
- show understanding of compound words.
- write sentences using participles.
- understand and use descriptive phrases for a tourism brochure.

### MATERIALS

Local tourism brochures, map of India, picture of houseboats, handouts

### ACTIVITY 1: Warm-up

(Pre-reading, 5 minutes)

1. Initiate a discussion on Kashmir by showing a map of India and asking a student to locate Kashmir. Ask students what they know about Kashmir (the beautiful valley and its lakes) and lead a discussion that will give them background information.

2. Pre-teach new vocabulary: Introduce (and write on the board) compound words that are found in the text: *houseboats, showpieces, bedrooms, sundeck, sunrays*. Elicit the meaning of these words from the students. Ask students to think of other compound words they know. (Here you might inform students that compound nouns with longer sounds or more syllables are presented as two words—for example, *walking stick* and *dining room*.)
3. You can explain the meaning of words such as *jade* and *cedar wood* by showing pictures of items made of these materials. You might mention qualities such as colour and texture.

### ACTIVITY 2: Paired Reading

(15 minutes)

1. Put the student in pairs and give them the text on the “Houseboats of Kashmir” (page 55) and a handout of the table on the next page to complete as they read the text. (You could also write the table on the board and have students copy it.)
2. Ask the students to read silently and then complete the table in consultation with their partners.
3. When students have completed their tables, discuss the answers with the class and provide the correct answers, if necessary. (If you have the table written on the board, you could ask students to go to the board to fill in the columns.)

## Sample Handout

Read “The Houseboats of Kashmir” and complete the table below. If you have more than one answer in a column, please number the answers.

Location	Specific details: size and material houseboats are made of	Rooms in the houseboat	Advantages of the deck	Access to other houseboats

### **ACTIVITY 3: Descriptive Phrase Game**

(10 minutes)

#### **Real Talk**

1. Divide the class into two groups and ask the groups to underline descriptive phrases that conjure a mental picture. Tell students that a descriptive phrase should describe a subject; it could describe a houseboat, lake, deck, etc.
2. Have the two groups take turns calling out a descriptive phrase without the subject. Have the other group say what that phrase describes.
3. You can give a model for students to follow: “What is shimmering under golden sunrays?” (the lake)

4. As the students call out phrases, write all the new phrases on the board.
5. After the game is finished, have students copy the phrases into their notebooks.

### **ACTIVITY 4: Practice**

(Form focus, 10 minutes)

1. Draw the attention of the class to the participles, both present and past, and ask the students to circle all the participles in the reading passage. (Examples are: *floating, coloured, growing, decorated, attached, running, built*, etc.) Then teach the use of participles in each of the sentences in which students have circled a word(s).

*continued on page 56*

# The Houseboats of Kashmir

(adapted from tourist brochures and Internet information)

Kashmir is famous for its beautiful houseboats. Visitors to the Kashmir valley rarely leave without staying on one of these floating palaces. The houseboats float on the calm and jade-coloured waters of Dal Lake, which has willow and chinar trees growing all around it. The houseboats are anchored among lotus fields and floating gardens.

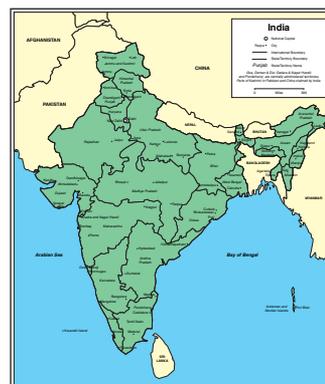
Houseboats were first built by the British. When a Maharaja of Kashmir did not allow the British to buy and own land, they decided to build the houseboats and make them their homes.

Today the Kashmiris live in these houseboats. They have made nice hotels in the houseboats, too. Built out of cedar wood and decorated with a lot of care, the houseboats are showpieces. They normally range from 24 to 38 metres in length, and three to six metres in width. A houseboat has a living room, a dining room, and two or three bedrooms with attached baths and hot and cold running

water. The rooms are built and decorated imaginatively to make guests' visits as comfortable and pleasant as possible.

The deck is one of the best features of a houseboat. It serves as a sundeck, a place for morning exercise, and a place for evening tea. Here you can enjoy the view of the magnificent mountains and the lake shimmering under golden sunrays.

Generally, individual houseboats are moored in fixed places around the lake. At times, four or five houseboats are anchored together with interconnecting bridges that enable people to move from one houseboat to another.



continued from page 54

2. Have students make a list of the participles from the reading passage. Then ask them to write three to five new sentences using the participles from their lists to describe something other than houseboats. Walk around the room and help students as they write their sentences. When the students have finished writing, have them work in pairs to compare and correct their sentences.
3. Optional: Have some students write their new sentences on the board. Discuss the use of participles in the new sentences.

### ACTIVITY 5: Writing

(10 minutes)

Ask the students to write a description of their homes. Tell them to describe the location, number of floors, rooms on each floor, the colour of the walls and curtains, the garden, the doors and windows.

### ACTIVITY 6: Follow-up

(Project)

Tell students that they are going to work in pairs to make a tourism brochure for their own city or town. In class you can do some prewriting activities with students to elicit places they might want to write about, to look at sample brochures, and to create a word bank of nouns (e.g., *visitors, features, rooms*), adjectives (e.g., *famous, beautiful, magnificent*), and past participles (e.g., *built, made, decorated*) that they will use in creating the text for their brochures.

Encourage students to write, correct, and revise the text for their brochures before they make the final copy. Ask students to look for pictures or make drawings to illustrate the brochures.

When the brochures are finished, have students share them in pairs or present them to the class. When they present their brochures, encourage them to imagine that they work for the tourist bureau and are trying to convince the class to visit their city or town.

---

**SHEFALI RAY**, a teacher-trainer, has been on the faculty of a government institute in New Delhi and is now a national resource person for Oxford University Press, India. She has written books for ESL classes, ELT material for teachers, and stories and poems for children. Currently she is working on mentoring for teachers.