

MY STOLEN SUNSHINE

TEACHER'S GUIDE | INTERMEDIATE B1+/B2 | MARSHALL APPOH

About this guide

A concise companion for teachers using My Stolen Sunshine with intermediate English learners. It offers a flexible teaching route, differentiation suggestions and higher-order discussion tasks. The published reader already includes its own comprehension questions, vocabulary work, speaking prompts and writing tasks; this guide is designed to complement, not reproduce, them.

Story at a glance

Recently reunited with her husband Jose in North London, Maria Martinez is struggling with homesickness, money worries and caring for her two young daughters. When the family's twin pushchair is stolen after a visit to relatives, Maria refuses to give up searching. The pushchair is not merely expensive to replace: it was a gift from her late mother. An unexpected sighting on a London bus leads to a tense attempt to establish ownership and, ultimately, a homecoming.

Themes and classroom opportunities

Belonging and migration: contrasting Maria's life in Spain with her new life in London; the role of relatives and community.

Family and resilience: the differing responses of Maria, Jose, Bea and Alfonso to loss and uncertainty.

Memory and material objects: the gap between an object's market price and its personal meaning.

Evidence and perspective: what Maria knows, what she assumes, and what the woman with the pushchair may or may not know.

Level suitability

B1+/B2: appropriate for stronger intermediate readers, with a mix of straightforward action, idiomatic description, emotional inference and suspense. B1 learners may benefit from pre-teaching selected expressions and guided chapter discussion; B2 learners can examine ambiguity, symbolism and narrative technique in greater depth.

Level is an instructional recommendation, not an externally certified CEFR assessment.

A FLEXIBLE FOUR-SESSION ROUTE

Adjust pacing to class length and whether reading is completed at home.

Session 1 | A new life and a sudden loss

Reading: Chapters 1–3. Begin with a brief pair discussion: What makes a place feel like home? Ask learners to identify concrete contrasts between Tabernes and North London. After reading, discuss how the missing pushchair affects the family financially and emotionally.

Focus: descriptive language, contrasts, first-person viewpoint and initial reactions to a crisis.

Session 2 | Why Maria cannot let go

Reading: Chapters 4–5. Invite learners to predict whether Maria will recover the pushchair and explain their evidence. Use the bus sequence to explore how short sentences and repeated details build tension.

Focus: prediction, pacing, evidence, inference and the significance of the scratch and dent.

Session 3 | Proof and uncertainty

Reading: Chapters 6–7. Ask students to distinguish the narrator’s certainty from proof acceptable to other people. Discuss why the police do not immediately return the pushchair and how the search for the receipt creates a second obstacle.

Focus: sequencing events, interpreting motives and discussing competing claims without making unsupported assumptions.

Session 4 | Home again and critical reading

Reading: Epilogue. Discuss the meaning of “sunshine” and how Maria’s view of London changes. Complete selected published speaking or writing tasks, then use the three literary-critic questions on the final page of this guide.

Focus: symbolism, resolution, justified opinion and hypothetical alternatives.

Use of existing activities

The reader already provides 30 chapter/epilogue comprehension questions, a key-word list with contextual practice and suggested answers, ten speaking prompts, and three writing choices (150–200 words). Select from these rather than assigning everything indiscriminately.

TEACHING NOTES

Discussion prompts that add interpretive depth to the published exercises.

1 | The pushchair as a symbol

At first, the pushchair seems to represent a practical necessity for a family with two small children. Later, we learn it was the last gift Maria received from her mother. Invite learners to trace how its meaning develops: convenience → loss → family memory → recovery → renewed belonging.

Prompt: At what point did you understand why Maria was so determined to find it? Did your opinion of her change?

2 | A narrator under pressure

Maria tells the story in the first person. Readers share her fear and certainty, but do not have direct access to the other woman's thoughts. This distinction supports discussion of reliable observation versus interpretation.

Prompt: Which details identify the pushchair? What does the story actually tell us about how the woman obtained it?

3 | Suspense without violence

The bus journey, the countdown of stops, the police call and the search for the receipt all generate suspense through delay and uncertainty rather than physical danger. Invite learners to locate one short passage and explain how its sentence structure affects pace.

Prompt: Which moment made you most anxious for Maria, and why?

4 | A new sense of home

The epilogue returns to the small flat and the grey London weather. The surroundings have not changed, but Maria's sense of herself and her adopted city has shifted. This offers a productive comparison with Chapter 1.

Prompt: Is the ending mainly about recovering an object, regaining confidence, or both?

A sensitive discussion note

Some students may have personal experiences of migration, bereavement, financial hardship or theft. Keep personal disclosure optional; students can analyse the fictional characters without discussing their own lives.

DIFFERENTIATION & ASSESSMENT

Keep tasks achievable for B1+ learners while giving B2 readers space to analyse.

For supported B1 / B1+ classes

Before reading, clarify a few high-impact terms from the existing vocabulary section (for example cramped, homesickness, scour, seize and reclaim). Use a simple timeline of the theft, bus sighting, police involvement and recovery. Allow pairs to rehearse answers before whole-class discussion.

Useful sentence frames: "Maria felt ___ because ___." "The scratch mattered because ___." "I think the woman might have ___, but the story does not say."

For B2 classes

Ask students to defend interpretations with specific scenes. Compare the opening and closing descriptions of London. Explore whether the other woman is portrayed fairly and how uncertainty changes the reader's judgement. Analyse the narrative function of the receipt and the recurring scratch.

Useful language: "The narrator implies that..." "An alternative interpretation is..." "The turning point occurs when..."

Quick formative assessment

Invite each student to submit three short responses: (1) one factual event they can sequence accurately; (2) one inference supported by a detail from the story; and (3) one personal evaluation supported by a reason. This checks comprehension, interpretation and critical response without a lengthy test.

Optional pair task | Two perspectives

Student A explains Maria's position; Student B considers the perspective of someone who may have bought a second-hand pushchair without knowing its history. Both must distinguish facts stated in the text from possibilities. Swap roles and agree on the fairest next step.

Optional writing extension

Write a brief alternative final scene or a message from Maria to a friend in Spain. Explain which emotional element of the original ending you would preserve. Teachers may instead assign one of the three writing tasks already printed in the reader.

BEYOND THE STORY

BECOME A LITERARY CRITIC | POST-READING DISCUSSION OR WRITING

These questions invite learners to evaluate the work as readers, not simply recall events. Encourage examples from the story and respectful disagreement.

1 | What did you like most about *My Stolen Sunshine*?

Consider the characters, the London setting, the suspense, the dialogue, the symbolism of the pushchair or the ending. Give reasons for your opinion.

2 | What didn't you like about *My Stolen Sunshine*?

Was anything confusing, unconvincing, disappointing or less interesting? Explain your answer and, where possible, refer to a specific scene.

3 | What would you have done differently if you were the author?

Would you change a character, add a scene, tell part of the story from another perspective or write a different ending? Explain why.

Teacher guidance

B1+: allow pair planning and sentence starters such as "I liked ____ because ____" and "If I were the author, I would ____."

B2: require at least one example from the text and a reasoned comparison between the original choice and the proposed alternative. Encourage precise language for criticism without dismissing other opinions.

Principle: there are no prescribed "correct" opinions. Evaluate the clarity of the argument and its support from the text, not whether students agree with the teacher.

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