

Pre-Reading Activities

A: Discussion

Discuss the following questions with a partner.

- Which of the five senses do you think is most important? Choose only one.
 Hearing Smelling Touching Tasting Seeing
- Which sense(s) do you use when you eat?



Reading Activities

A: Comprehension

Scanning: Read the questions below and then scan the article quickly to find the answers.

- Which city is the restaurant in?
- What is the name of the restaurant?
- Where in the restaurant do you choose whether you will have a vegetarian or meat dish?
- What are you not allowed to take into the dining area?
- Who helps you in the restaurant?

Table Talk: Blind restaurant an eye-opener for London diners

LONDON, Tue Sep 14 (Reuters Life!) - Dining in a completely dark room, unaware what's on your plate while sitting next to a complete stranger may not sound like an ideal restaurant experience but it's certainly an intriguing way to spend a rainy night in London.

Dans le Noir?, close to London's City financial district, is staffed by blind waiters and waitresses who become your eyes according to the restaurant, whose original Paris branch opened in 2004.

In the lit bar, you choose whether you want the fish, meat or vegetable menu but the dishes themselves remain a secret, as do the ingredients of the "surprise" cocktails.

Bags, coats and devices that light up, including watches and mobile phones, are stowed away in lockers, making no distracting texts or emails one of the perks in this restaurant.

Placing your hand on the shoulder of your guide, you are led to a table in a pitch-black dining room that seats up to 60 people. And it is dark. Darkness of a kind you never get to see in a modern world of light pollution.

Only once did we glimpse a square of faint light from a doorway and there were certainly no candles on the cake for a birthday at a table somewhere off in the inky blackness.

The waiters tell you when the food is being placed down in front of you, then the fun begins of first, trying to get food in your mouth, then identifying just what it is that's on your plate, and finally whether you missed any of it.

It's also a great chance to break free of social convention and eat using your fingers. Those same fingers are also the only way you can tell how much wine you're pouring into your glass.

The convivial atmosphere in the dining room also made the night memorable. You can't really avoid talking to the person next to you at the long tables and guessing what the dishes are certainly provides adequate fuel for the conversations.

Having no idea what your interlocutor looks like, of their facial expressions or whether they're waving their hands about to get their point across (until they poke you, that is) is a real eye-opener in terms of preconceptions too.

All is revealed at the end of the meal, as you are led back out into the lit bar, conga-style. Not only do you finally get to see what you've just been eating but also who you've been talking to for the last 90 minutes.

"An interesting place for a date?," my friend quipped upon leaving.

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B: Reading Carefully

Read the questions below and then read the article carefully to find the answers.

1. What makes this restaurant so unique?
2. What difficulties are there for diners once the food is served?
3. What did the writer enjoy about this way of dining?
4. How did this restaurant change the way people talked during the meal? ?

C: Vocabulary

The following words in today's article have a number of meanings. Find the following words or phrases in the article, guess the meanings of the words without using your dictionary, and write your definitions next to the words. After you have written down your definitions, check in your dictionary to see if it contains similar definitions.

1. light up, _____

2. pitch-black, _____

3. fuel _____

D: Thinking Carefully

What do these sentences mean? Explain them in your own words.

The convivial atmosphere in the dining room also made the night memorable.

All is revealed at the end of the meal, as you are led back out into the lit bar, conga-style.

Post-Reading Activities

You may do one or more of these.

A: Experience Dans le Noir? Restaurant

Your class is going to reenact the Dans le Noir? Restaurant. Divide into two groups. Each group then spends some time organizing what food and drink they are going to bring for the other group's eating experience. On the day your classroom becomes a restaurant, one group will serve the other group and observe them. The group eating at the table will talk and eat as if they are at a restaurant. After the food is eaten, your two groups will change roles.

B: Journal Entry

Write about your classroom experience eating while not being able to see. How did you feel? How was it different from eating when you can see?

C: Presentation

What makes a good restaurant? Your group has decided to open up a new restaurant.

Discuss the points below and then present your information to the class in the form of a promotional presentation. In your presentation say good things about the menu, clientele, hours of business, decor and the name of the restaurant so that people listening to your presentation will want to go there.

1. **Menu:** What kind of food will you serve? Will the prices be expensive, reasonable or cheap?
2. **Clientele:** What kind of customers do you want to come to your restaurant?
3. **Hours of business:** How many hours a day and how many days a week will you be open?
4. **Decor:** Does your restaurant have a theme? What kind of furniture would you select? What colors would you use?
5. **Name:** What is the restaurant's name?



TEACHERS' NOTES AND ANSWER KEY

Please Note:

This lesson also has an accompanying Instant Workbook exercise for your students to do on-line.

Reading Activities

A: Comprehension - Answers

1. London, 2. Dans le Noir?, 3. in the bar, 4. anything that lights up like a watch or phone: bags and coats, 5. the waiters

B: Reading Carefully - Answers

1. It's pitch dark and you're seated next to people you don't know.
2. You don't know what exactly you are eating, or see who you are talking to.
3. the adventure of trying to eat with your fingers, not worrying about rules of politeness while eating because no one can see you, talking to strangers as everyone is more relaxed in the darkness.
4. you have plenty to talk about, you can't use looking at someone's body language to help you in these conversations.

C: Vocabulary - Notes

Students will get the most out of this activity if they use English-English dictionaries. Remind the students to look for the correct form of the word when they look for meanings as this will help narrow down the number of possible meanings.

C: Vocabulary - Answers

1. light up (verb): the surface shows light when pressed or moved so you can see it clearly
2. pitch black (adj): very dark; as black as pitch (a thick dark substance obtained by boiling down tar)
3. fuel (noun): a thing providing opportunity for conversation

D: Thinking Carefully - Suggested Answers

1. The atmosphere in the restaurant is very cheerful or merry which means diners will remember the occasion.
2. At the end of the dinner you find out what you ate and who you ate with when you go back to the lit bar and can see again.

Post-Reading Activities

A: Experience Dans le Noir? Restaurant - Notes

This is a big activity that will require some planning. Students often enjoy food parties so you should have little trouble motivating students to organize this restaurant scenario. Set a date for when your class will have this 'restaurant' experience. Encourage students to cook or bring all kinds of different food, the more exotic the better. Discourage them from bringing food that might be very unpleasant to others. Also, students serving food should be aware of who is vegetarian or who has specific food allergies. You should ask these questions before the students get in their groups. Bring enough blindfolds for all the students eating. This activity offers a lot of scope. Before the actual restaurant day, you could spend time discussing small talk, eating etiquette and more. It is really up to you. Send us an e-mail here at editor@english-to-go.com to let us know how this activity went.

B: Journal entry - Notes

Students can complete someone else's journal entry on-line. by going to <http://www.instantworkbook.com> and entering the username and password that you have preselected for them. Students can listen to an additional text about a similar restaurant in Germany, they can complete a journal entry.

C: Presentation - Notes

The purpose of this oral presentation is for the students to promote their restaurant. One or more students could do the presentation for the group. You might want to remind students to choose descriptive words carefully so that their restaurant sounds like the best place to eat out at in the whole city! Encourage students to use visuals to enhance their presentation. Should the restaurant have a web page?

