

**Josefina R. Aldecoa** was a Spanish writer and teacher who was born in 1926 and died in 2011. She wrote as part of a literary movement that aimed to weaken the censorship of the Franco dictatorship. The extract below is from the book *Historia de una maestra*, written in 1990, which tells the story of Gabriela, a young teacher, who goes to work in different villages in Spain in 1923, and the challenges she faces. She will move to Equatorial Guinea, a country in central Africa and a Spanish colony at that time. The extract describes how she taught the children in her new school there.

**A Read both extracts once, without stopping for unfamiliar words, sounding out difficult words in your head without vocalising them.**

Ningún niño sabía español suficiente para entender la explicación. Yo dibujaba en la pizarra las cosas con sus nombres e intentaba que ellos reconocieran las palabras cuando borraba los dibujos. Una pizarra gris y rota, apoyada en el suelo, era la única ayuda.

Más tarde, de mi caja salieron libros, cuadernos, lápices y mapas. Al ver los objetos los alumnos mostraban precaución. Luego se acercaban y tocaban las nuevas cosas para demostrar su inocencia.

Source: Josefina R. Aldecoa, *Historia de una maestra*, Punto de Lectura, S.L.

*Ningún* is a negative word, which means 'no'/'not one'.

**B Skim both extracts again and highlight all the words related to a classroom that you can find.**

**C Write the Spanish translations of the words below.**

- 1 Spanish \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 blackboard \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 words \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 drawings \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 books \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 exercise books \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 pencils \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 maps \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 students \_\_\_\_\_

★ Remember, 'skimming' an extract is to read it quickly to get an overall idea without stopping at difficult words.

**D Underline all the verbs in the extract and then match them to the following English translations. The verbs appear in this order.**

- 1 (they) knew \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 to understand \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 I drew \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 I tried \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 they recognised \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 I rubbed out \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 it was \_\_\_\_\_

- 8 (things) came out \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 to see \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 they showed \_\_\_\_\_
- 11 they got closer \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 they touched \_\_\_\_\_
- 13 to show \_\_\_\_\_



Use what you know about verbs to help you to complete this task. For example, infinitives will always end in *-ar*, *-er* or *-ir* and mean 'to' in English.

**E Read the extract again, more closely, and answer the questions in English, using full sentences.**



You do not need to understand every word of a literary extract in order to understand the gist of it, or to accurately answer questions on it. Focus on the language you do know first of all and begin to build a picture of what the extract is about.

1 Why could students not understand the teacher's explanations?

\_\_\_\_\_

2 What did the teacher put on the board? Mention two things.

\_\_\_\_\_

3 How would she try to help them to understand the vocabulary?

\_\_\_\_\_

4 What was the blackboard like? Mention two things.

\_\_\_\_\_

5 What did the teacher take out of the box?

\_\_\_\_\_

6 When were the students nervous?

\_\_\_\_\_

7 How did they show that they weren't nervous anymore?

\_\_\_\_\_

### Extension

Describe your classroom in Spanish. You could use the following language to help you:

- *hay* – there is
- *tiene* – it has
- *tenemos* – we have
- *es* – it is

## Answers

## B

*español, pizarra, dibujos, caja, libros, cuadernos, lápices, mapas, alumnos*

## C

1 *español*

6 *cuadernos*

2 *la pizarra*

7 *lápices*

3 *las palabras*

8 *mapas*

4 *los dibujos*

9 *los alumnos*

5 *libros*

## D

1 (they) knew – *sabía*

8 (things) came out – *salieron*

2 to understand – *entender*

9 to see – *ver*

3 I drew – *dibujaba*

10 they showed – *mostraban*

4 I tried – *intentaba*

11 they got closer – *se acercaban*

5 they recognised – *reconocieron*

12 they touched – *tocaban*

6 I rubbed out – *borraba*

13 to show – *demostrar*

7 it was – *era*

## E

1 The students didn't know enough Spanish to understand the explanations.

2 The teacher drew pictures and wrote the words for the pictures on the board.

3 The teacher would try to help them to learn the new vocabulary by rubbing out the pictures.

4 The blackboard was grey, broken and was leaning against the floor.

5 The teacher took books, exercise books, pencils and maps out of her box.

6 The students were nervous when they saw these new objects.

7 The students showed that they weren't nervous any more by moving closer and touching the new things.

## Extension

Students' own answers