Living graphs

**Analysing and evaluating data is an example of higher order thinking that can be difficult for some EAL learners to fully express through writing. An explanatory text needs a specific structure, featuring abstract and condensed language. Use living graphs to help learners interpret trend and patterns in data. Living graphs require learners to justify the position of information against a timeline of events…Once the position of the statements has been agreed, learners can sequence them together to form a detailed, cohesive piece of writing.*

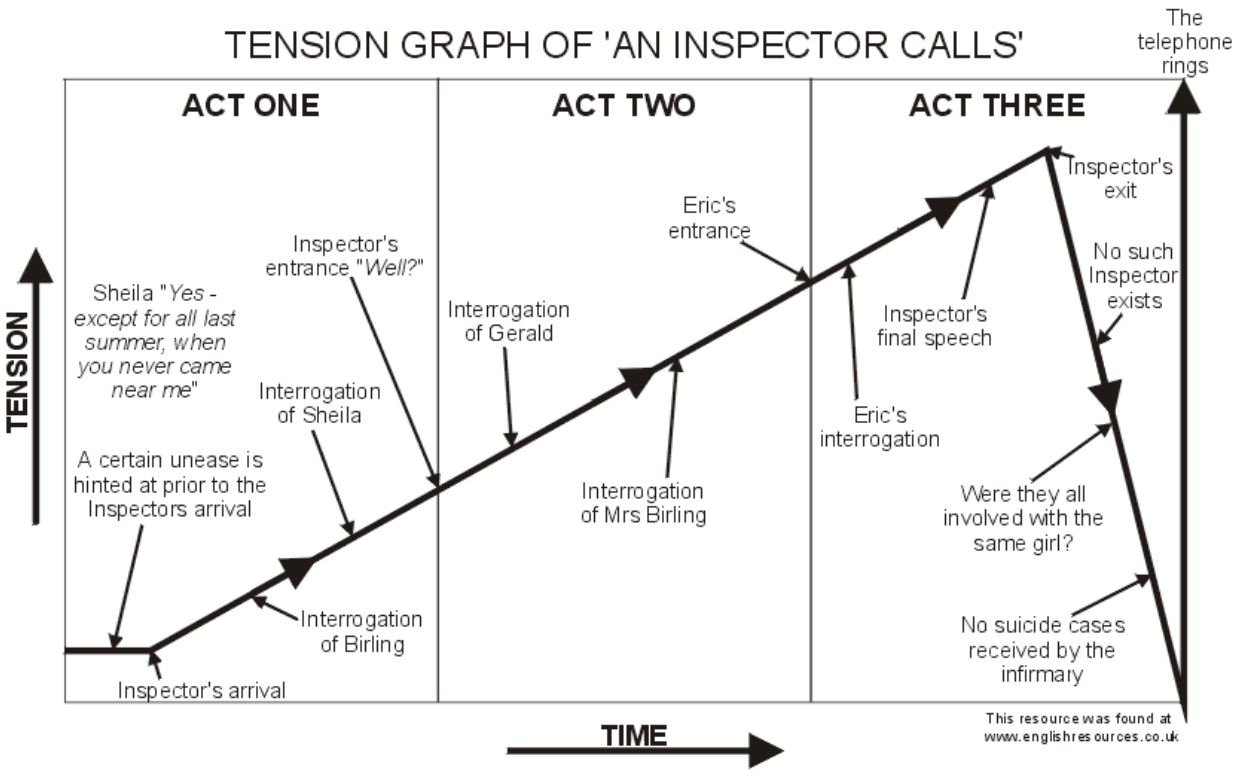
*Paraphrased from:
100 Ideas for Primary Teachers: Supporting EAL Learners, Bloomsbury (2018)
100 Ideas for Secondary Teachers: Supporting EAL Learners, Bloomsbury (2018)

Living graphs can be developed around any kind of continuous data e.g.

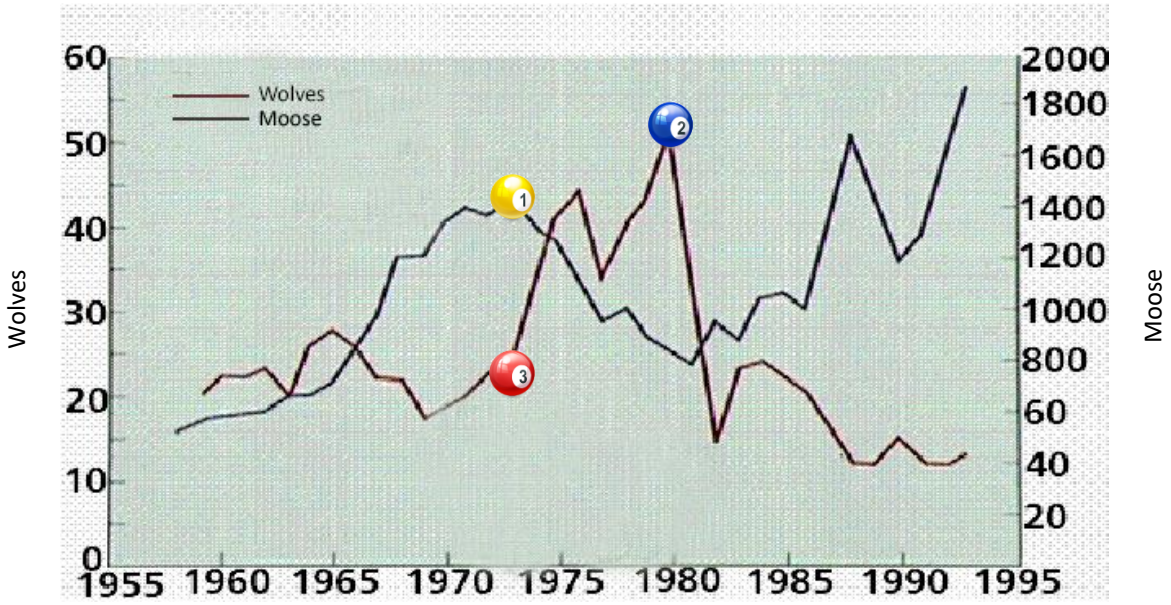
- a bar graph to show how the volume of traffic varies throughout a day
- a seismograph of earth movements before, during and after an earthquake
- a population pyramid illustrating population fluctuations over time
- a graph showing how 'mood' changes throughout a book/play (see example on next page)
- a line graph describing the interrelationship between a predator and its prey over several years (see example on next page)

Ideas for using Living graphs

- provide a blank template for learners to plot their own data and encourage annotation to explain changes at significant points along the graph
- provide a blank template and ask learners to draw an approximation of 'mood' change along a timeline e.g. success/failure or the amount of danger in an event, a person's guilt, their love for another character or the amount of power they wield over others etc. Next encourage annotation (as above)
- provide the graph and ask learners to match bits of pre-written explanatory text to the correct locations on the graph
- use a completed living graph or provide one – ask learners to use the information to develop an extended piece of prose. Learners with a Proficiency in English around the B/C border band may benefit from writing frames that include sequential language like 'at first/at the beginning…' and cause and effect structures like 'this happened because…' and 'as a result…' etc. Vocabulary lists of technical language might also be useful for some learners.



Fluctuations in predator (wolves) : prey (moose) population numbers over time



When the moose population was at its peak, a series of four severe winters led to mass starvation

Here, the number of wolves declined drastically because humans accidentally introduced a deadly disease into the wolf population

Vulnerability of moose to wolf attacks, led to an explosion in the number of wolves during this period of time