

ROCKY BALBOA™

– Extra

Level 2

This level is suitable for students who have been learning English for at least two years and up to three years. It corresponds with the Common European Framework level A2.

SYNOPSIS

Rocky's glory days as heavyweight boxing champion of the world are over. He now owns a small restaurant in Philadelphia and spends his nights telling customers old boxing tales. Rocky's self-esteem is low. His wife, Adrian, died three years ago and he is still unable to come to terms with her loss. His relationship with his son, Robert, is becoming increasingly distant as Robert struggles to cope with the shadow of his father's glorious past. When a TV sports programme shows a simulated computer fight between Rocky and the successful, but unpopular, current champion, Mason Dixon, Rocky decides to return to the ring. Rocky is only intending to take on some small fights, and he is shocked and flattered when the media interest following the TV programme prompts Mason Dixon's manager to suggest a real exhibition fight between the two men.

It doesn't take much to persuade Rocky to take on the big opponent once more. For Dixon it is just an easy fight for publicity purposes. However, for Rocky the fight is much more important. It's an opportunity for him to prove that he is still a force to be reckoned with and to show the world that age needn't prevent us from achieving our dreams. With the support of friends, and with Robert back by his side, the courageous fighter trains hard. At the fight in Las Vegas, he surprises everybody by giving the champion a long, hard fight. The fight is very close, but Dixon wins and earns the respect of the public at last. Rocky gets his self-respect back, and is finally able to move on with the rest of his life.

THE BACK STORY

The Oscar-winning 1976 film *Rocky* was hugely successful. This powerful story of boxer Rocky Balboa – an underdog who never gives up – made writer and actor, Sylvester Stallone, instantly famous. He went on to star in other successful films, but Stallone returned to the story of Rocky Balboa again and again.

Fans thought that the 1990 movie *Rocky V* was the last in the series, but Stallone surprised everybody with his decision 15 years later to make one last Rocky film. Inevitably, the film explores themes of getting older and coming to terms with the past. The film contains footage of scenes from previous Rocky films and some of the minor characters are from the earlier films. For example, Stallone gives a job to old boxer Spider Rico – this character, played by the same actor, was Rocky's opponent in the opening scene of the first Rocky movie.

With its taglines of 'It ain't over 'til it's over' and 'Never give up and never stop believing', the movie has been favourably received and is a fitting close to the Rocky movie dynasty.

MEDIA LINKS

DVD: *Rocky Balboa* is available on DVD.

CD: A recording of *Rocky Balboa* is available to accompany the Richmond reader.

Internet: For more information about the film (and the other Rocky films) visit www.rocky.com.

Book: *Rocky: The Ultimate Guide* (Dorling Kindersley) covers the story and the making of all the films in the series.

HOW TO USE YOUR RICHMOND MEDIA READER

Choosing and motivating

Is this the right story for your class? Have the students seen the film? Have they seen any of the other Rocky films? Motivate them with background information (see The Back Story above) and by reading aloud the first page of the story with dramatic atmosphere.

Organising

Plan a class reading schedule. Decide how many pages to set for reading each week. Select exercises from the Self-Study section at the back of the reader and extra activities from this resource sheet to go with each chunk of reading. (Answers on page 4.)

Using the CD

Students can listen and follow in their books. They can listen and then read. They can read and then listen. All these activities will improve their reading speeds and skills.

Using the DVD

Select the English language option on the DVD. The film is 97 minutes. You could show it in chunks of, say, 20 minutes in parallel with the class reading schedule. Alternatively, show it when the class have finished the book, as a reward.

Glossary

Go to 'New Words' at the back of the reader. Translate the words with the class or get students to find meanings at home. The Vocabulary Builder on page 3 of this resource sheet practises the new words in a different context.

Casual language

Introduce the informal expressions used in *Rocky Balboa*. (See Vocabulary Builder on page 3 of this resource sheet.) Put them into context. Ask students to look out for them as they read.

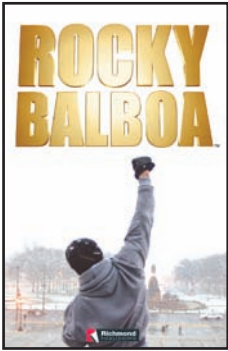
Fact Files

Set these as self-study or use for whole class work. They provide background information about the series of Rocky films, the background to and filming of this final Rocky film, and the reasons why many youngsters are drawn to boxing.

What did they think?

Get everyone to do a written or spoken review of *Rocky Balboa*. Compare opinions. Will they go and see the film? Did you like it?

RESOURCE SHEET STUDENT ACTIVITIES



ROCKY BALBOA™

– Extra

People and places

1 Who ...

- a) ... last fought fifteen years ago? *Rocky Balboa*
- b) ... is the heavyweight champion of the world?
- c) ... works in a bar?
- d) ... died three years ago?
- e) ... hasn't even heard of Rocky Balboa?
- f) ... works in an office?
- g) ... is the brother of Rocky's wife?
- h) ... has a plan to make some money?

2 Answer the questions about Philadelphia and Las Vegas.

- a) Which city is in the west of the USA? *Las Vegas*
- b) Where did Rocky grow up?
- c) Which city is famous for its boxing matches?
- d) Which city has many casinos?
- e) Where does Rocky live?

Chapters 1–2

1 Circle the correct words in *italics*.

- a) Mason Dixon has won *most* / all of his boxing matches.
- b) The crowd *boos* / *cheers* Mason Dixon when he leaves the ring.
- c) Rocky meets his son's *boss* / *friends*.
- d) Rocky owns a small *restaurant* / *gym*.
- e) Years ago Rocky's wife worked in a *pet shop* / *bar*.
- f) Rocky is especially sad on this day because it is *his* / *his wife's* birthday.

2 Answer the questions.

- a) Why is Mason Dixon unpopular?
.....
- b) Why is Robert uncomfortable with his father?
.....
- c) Where does Rocky meet Marie?
.....
- d) Who is Steps?
.....

- e) Who is Martin?
.....
- f) What does Martin tell Mason Dixon?
.....
- g) Who wins the computer fight on TV?
.....
- h) Where is Robert when he sees the computer fight?
.....

3 Think of adjectives to describe ...

- a) Paulie b) Marie c) Robert Balboa

Chapters 3–4

1 Who says these things?

- a) 'I can win against him with both hands behind my back!' *Mason Dixon*
- b) 'Balboa wasn't so good.'
- c) 'Hard work makes your head strong.'
- d) 'Time catches all of us.'
- e) 'Time only catches you if you stand still.'
- f) 'They'll never give you a licence.'

2 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)? Correct the wrong sentences.

- a) Rocky gives Paulie a weekend job at his restaurant.
- b) Rocky gets a dog from a dog's home.
- c) Rocky is not interested in the computer fight.
- d) Robert is happy that his father wants to fight again.
- e) Rocky persuades the Boxing Commission to give him a licence to fight.
- f) Marie starts working at the restaurant.
- g) Paulie gets a new job.

3 Work in pairs. One of you is Rocky and one of you is Mason Dixon. Why is this fight so important to you? Write a few notes and then tell your partner.

Chapters 5–6

1 Who says these things – the presenter, the commentator, Dixon's trainer, Duke or Paulie?

- a) 'Welcome to Las Vegas!' *the presenter*
- b) 'Remember – every punch has to hurt.'
- c) 'This isn't looking good for Balboa.'
- d) 'Keep away from those hard punches!'
- e) 'What happened to that fire inside you?'
- f) 'Dixon threw sixty-nine punches and fifty-nine of them hit Rocky.'

RESOURCE SHEET STUDENT ACTIVITIES

2 Fill in the correct name in each sentence.

- a) *Mason Dixon* becomes angry with the newspaper writers.
- b) asks his father not to fight.
- c) leaves his job.
- d) starts training in Philadelphia.
- e) Dixon tells not to hurt him in the fight.
- f) Marie gives Rocky a photo of

3 Answer the questions. How does Rocky feel ...

- a) ... when Robert comes to Adrian's grave?
- b) ... when he is training?
- c) ... after Round Two?

Chapter 7

1 Order the events.

- a) Rocky falls.
- b) The two men fall into each other's arms.
- c) Dixon hurts his left hand.
- d) Rocky hits Dixon again and again.
- e) Both men are tired but they keep fighting.
- f) Rocky gets up again.
- g) The fighters touch gloves.
- h) The two fighters don't hear the bell.

2 Use these words to complete these sentences about the end of the fight.

believe cheers fight lifts tells visits

- a) The crowd could not *believe* that the two fighters stayed on their feet.
- b) Rocky Mason Dixon he is a great champion.
- c) The crowd Dixon's name for the first time ever.
- d) Rocky his hand to say goodbye.
- e) Back in Philadelphia, Rocky Adrian's grave.
- f) Rocky is never going to again.

3 What do you think? Who is the best fighter and why?

FINAL TASKS

1 Speaking. When he returns to Philadelphia, Rocky Balboa is interviewed on the radio. Work in pairs. Student A: You are the interviewer. Prepare some possible questions about the big fight with Mason Dixon, about Rocky's past and about his future. Student B: You are Rocky Balboa. Prepare some possible answers. Consider what you would like to say about the big fight, your past and your plans for the future. Role-play the interview.

2 Writing. Imagine you are a sports writer for a newspaper. Write a story about the big fight between Rocky Balboa and Mason Dixon.

3 Imagine you are a character in the book (but not Rocky Balboa). Write parts of your diary for the days leading up to and including the big fight.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

1 Look at the 'New Words' at the back of Rocky Balboa. Complete the gaps with words from the list. Use any verbs in the correct tense.

The two boxers stepped into the (1) *ring* at the start of the fight. Dixon was the (2) of the world. His (3) , Rocky Balboa from Philadelphia, was much older. The (4) wanted Balboa to win. They started to shout his name and they (5) for him. They did not like Dixon and began to (6) him. The (7) spoke to the two men, and then the fight began. Dixon was fast – he (8) Balboa again and again. But Rocky was strong. He wanted to (9) Dixon!

2 Answer these questions using words from the 'New Words' list.

1. Where do boxers train? *at the gym*
2. Who decides who a boxer will fight?
3. What can make a sound in church or in a boxing match?
4. What can you lift to become strong?
5. Who talks about sports on the radio?
6. What do boxers wear on their hands?
7. What does Rocky need before he can fight again?
8. Where does Rocky go to talk to Adrian?

Casual language

- 'The fight was **over**.' (p.6). This means that the fight has finished. (See also p.35, p.36, p.40, p.41 and p.45.)
- '**What's up?**' (p.14). Steps says when he meets Rocky. In American English, this means the same as 'How are you?'
- Mason Dixon's old trainer tells him, 'Maybe you won't **get through** it' (p.16). 'Get through' here means 'survive'.
- '**Sure**.' (p.18). Steps says this when Rocky offers him a job. It means 'OK'.
- '**What's in it for you?**' (p.30). One of the newspaper writers asks Mason Dixon this. We say this when we are asking why somebody is doing something.

Complete the sentences below with the expressions:

1. A: 'This is my friend, Pedro.'
B: '.....'
2. 'We left the cinema when the film was
3. A: 'Do you want a coffee?'
B: '....., thanks.'
4. 'I can't believe you're going to do that. ?'
5. 'The exam will be hard, but you'll it.'

ROCKY: THE LEGEND (pages 48–9)

Quiz

Prepare up to 20 questions about the Rocky films, using the information in the Fact File. In class, students read pages 48–9 and remember as much information as they can. Tell the students to close their books, and divide the class into two teams. Ask each team a question in turn. If the team gets an answer right, they get a point. If they get an answer wrong, the other team gets a chance to answer and win a point. The team with the most points at the end is the winner.

Film discussion group

Divide the students into small groups. Each group should find out more about one of the earlier Rocky films. If possible, the group could watch the film on DVD. Otherwise, they could find out more about the film's plot and read reviews on websites such as the Internet Movie Database. (www.imdb.com)

Students then come together as a group and discuss the whole series. Which film do they think is the best? Why? As an alternative, you could assign different boxing films (for example, *Raging Bull*), to some groups.

ROCKY BALBOA: THE END OF THE STORY (page 50–1)

Research and presentation

The Fact File discusses some real boxers and boxing stories that may have in part inspired Sylvester Stallone to write *Rocky Balboa*. Divide the students into small groups, and have each group find out more about one of the following topics:

- Rocky Marciano, his life and career
- the amazing success of Muhammad Ali
- the film *Super Fight* (1969)
- the late career of George Foreman

Writing a scene

Divide students into small groups. Ask each group to choose a minor character from the film, for example, Paulie, Marie, Steps, Robert. Ask each group to write an additional scene for the end of the film showing what happens to that character next. If possible, the groups could rehearse their scene and act it out for the rest of the class.

BOXING CHANGED MY LIFE! (pages 52–3)

Questionnaire

Prepare a survey about attitudes towards boxing in your class. Elicit possible questions. For example: *Have you ever boxed? Do you watch boxing matches? Do you think boxing is too dangerous? What famous boxers have you heard of?* When they have settled on a list of questions, students should conduct the survey. Their findings could be the basis for a class discussion.

Debate

Discuss the fact that some people want to ban the sport of boxing. Ask the class to vote on the question: *Is boxing a good thing?* After the vote, divide the class in two. One group prepares arguments in favour of the topic. The other group presents arguments against. The first group presents their ideas and the second group questions them. Then they swap. Ask the class to vote for a second time. Has anyone changed their minds?

FILM/CD FOLLOW-UP

What happens next?

Stop the CD or DVD just before a dramatic moment. Students say what has just happened and what is about to happen.

Top scene

The class makes a list of the key film scenes and writes them on the board. The class votes on which scene they would most like

to watch. Show that scene in class. (You might use this as a means of selecting the scene for the following activity.)

What are they saying?

Choose a dramatic scene that the students are familiar with. Play the scene without sound. Ask the students to suggest what the characters are saying. Students work in small groups and write the dialogue for the scene and then act it out. Finally the whole class watches the scene with sound. Compare the two dialogues.

ANSWER KEY

Self-Study Activities (pages 54–6)

- 1 a) in a boxing ring b) in the gym c) a commentator
- 2 a) grave b) crowd c) boo d) respect e) punched f) beat g) opponent
- 3 a) wife b) son c) mother d) manager
- 4 a) F b) T c) F d) T e) T f) T g) F
- 5 a) iii b) i c) iv d) ii
- 6 The correct order is: d, h, a, e, b, f, c, g.
- 7 a) Paulie to Rocky b) Rocky to the Boxing Commission c) Mason Dixon to his manager, LC d) LC to Rocky e) Marie to Rocky f) Rocky to the newspaper writers and television cameras g) Robert to Rocky h) Rocky to Robert
- 10 a) gloves b) bell c) referee d) cheers
- 12 a) Las Vegas. Rocky is pleased because it is easier to fight in hot weather. b) He tells Rocky not to hurt him. c) Paulie d) Mason Dixon e) Rocky f) He breaks it. g) Mason Dixon h) They have respect for him because he fought a hard fight.

Resource Sheet Activities

People and places

- 1 b) Mason Dixon c) Marie d) Adrian e) Steps f) Robert Balboa g) Paulie h) LC
- 2 b) Philadelphia c) Las Vegas d) Las Vegas e) Philadelphia

Chapters 1–2

- 1 b) boos c) boss d) restaurant e) pet shop f) his wife's
- 2 a) Because he only has easy fights. b) He thinks it is not easy to have a famous father. c) He meets her in a bar. d) Steps is Marie's son. e) Martin is Mason Dixon's old trainer. f) Martin tells Dixon he needs a hard fight. g) Rocky Balboa h) He is in a bar with his friends.

Chapters 3–4

- 1 b) LC c) Rocky d) Robert e) Rocky f) Paulie
- 2 a) False. Rocky gives Steps a weekend job at his restaurant. b) True c) False. Rocky is interested in the computer fight. d) False. Robert is not happy that his father wants to fight again. e) True f) True g) False. Paulie loses his job.

Chapters 5–6

- 1 b) Duke c) the commentator d) Dixon's trainer e) Paulie f) the commentator
- 2 b) Robert c) Robert d) Rocky e) Rocky f) Adrian

Chapter 7

- 1 The correct order is: c, d, h, e, g, a, f, b.
- 2 b) tells c) cheers d) lifts e) visits f) fight

Vocabulary Builder

- 1 2. heavyweight champion 3. opponent 4. crowd 5. cheered 6. boo 7. referee 8. punched 9. beat
- 2 2. the manager 3. a bell 4. weights 5. a commentator 6. gloves 7. a licence 8. her grave

Casual language

1. What's up? 2. over 3. Sure 4. What's in it for you? 5. get through