Photo captions

<table>
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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Photo captions, speaking about photos, story writing</th>
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| Aims  | To practice language of speculation  
To provide practice of narrative tenses  
To develop speaking and writing skills |
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Teenage/ young adult</th>
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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>B1+</th>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>60 minutes +</th>
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Introduction

This lesson consists of three of activities to provoke discussion and provide ideas for collaborative story writing. Unusual photos from the LearnEnglish Teens photo caption section are the main focus of the lesson http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/photo-captions. This lesson should introduce students to the LearnEnglish Teens website, encourage discussion and speculation about photos. Students brainstorm possible scenarios of what is happening in the photos. This should stimulate students' imagination and form a basis for collaborative writing.

Procedure for activity 1: Caption matching and writing task

| 1. Before class | Choose 3 or 4 pictures from the photo captions section of the LearnEnglish Teens photo caption section, and one of two of the captions written by users to accompany each picture. Print the pictures or copy the links to the pictures if you are going to project them using a data projector or Interactive Whiteboard. |
2. In class

- Show students the pictures. Read out or distribute the captions. Students match the captions to the pictures.
- Put students in pairs and ask them to write their own captions for one or more of the pictures (optional: add more pictures for students to choose from).
- Open class or in small groups: students read out their captions and other students guess which picture the caption refers to.

**Procedure for activity 2: Brainstorming task**

| Before class | • Find an unusual picture (e.g. Photo caption 001, man in a wheelie bin) [http://learnenglish.teens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/photo-captions/photo-captions-photo-capture-001](http://learnenglish.teens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/photo-captions/photo-captions-photo-capture-001)  
  • Print the picture or note the link to it. Print one picture per group of 3 or 4 students (to print: right click on the image and open in a new tab).  
  • Suggestions for pictures are Photo caption 019 (diver in a bath); Photo caption 015 (man outside an aeroplane window); Photo caption 012 (man exhausted on the ground in tennis gear); Photo caption 011 (a very special granny); Photo caption 010 (man and alien); Photo caption 004 (young mathematician); Photo caption 003 (dog in bed). |
| Brainstorming task | • Elicit what students can see in the picture.  
  • Brainstorm who the man in the picture is: What's his job? How old is he? Where is the bin? What he is doing there? Is he hiding? Who from? Why? What happened before the picture was taken and what happened afterwards?  
  • Try to elicit as much information as possible and accept all plausible answers, the idea being to stimulate your class’s imagination as much as possible. |
| Language focus | • Encourage students to use language to speculate:  
  *Maybe*…  
  *Perhaps*…  
  *It looks like*…..  
  *He could / might / may be*….  
  *One possibility is that*…
  
  • Write this and other language for talking about pictures on the board:  
  *At the top/bottom of the picture*…  
  *On the left / right*…  
  *We can see*…  
  *In the foreground / in the background*…  
  *There is / are*….. |
Brainstorming task (repeated)

- Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4. Give each class a new picture.
- Students repeat the brainstorming procedure as a speaking activity. A spokesperson for the group feeds back to the class.

Procedure for activity 3: Collaborative writing task

Setting up and monitoring the writing task

- Tell students that in their group, they are going to write the story to accompany their picture.
- Remind students that they should write their story using past tenses. To keep students on task, you could either tell them that you want 3 (or 4) copies of exactly the same story (i.e. that all students have to write) OR you could allocate ‘jobs’, one student is the writer, one is in charge or looking up any words they need in a dictionary, another is the ‘editor’ in charge of checking for mistakes.
- Students write their story in their groups.
- Monitor and help with vocabulary and syntax. You can choose whether you want to point out mistakes as they are writing, or whether to let the writing process continue uninterrupted and get students to edit their work later.

Follow-up

- Stories can be read out / displayed around the class so that everyone can read all the stories.

Alternative task

- Make this a process writing activity. Groups write for 10 minutes, then stop and exchange their story with another group.
- The group reads the new story, edits it for mistakes (the teacher can prompt and help as he / she monitors here) and then continues writing. This process continues for a designated time (the teacher decides when and tells class ‘now write the ending for the story you have in front of you’).
- As with the activity above, stories can be read out / displayed around the class so that everyone can read all the stories.

Extension

- Make a class display with captions and pictures and the stories accompanying them. You could give a small prize for the best caption(s). You could continue this on a weekly basis with new pictures from LearnEnglish Teens, encouraging students to write their captions online. 13-17-year-olds can sign up for a free account on LearnEnglish Teens here.

By Anna Blackmore